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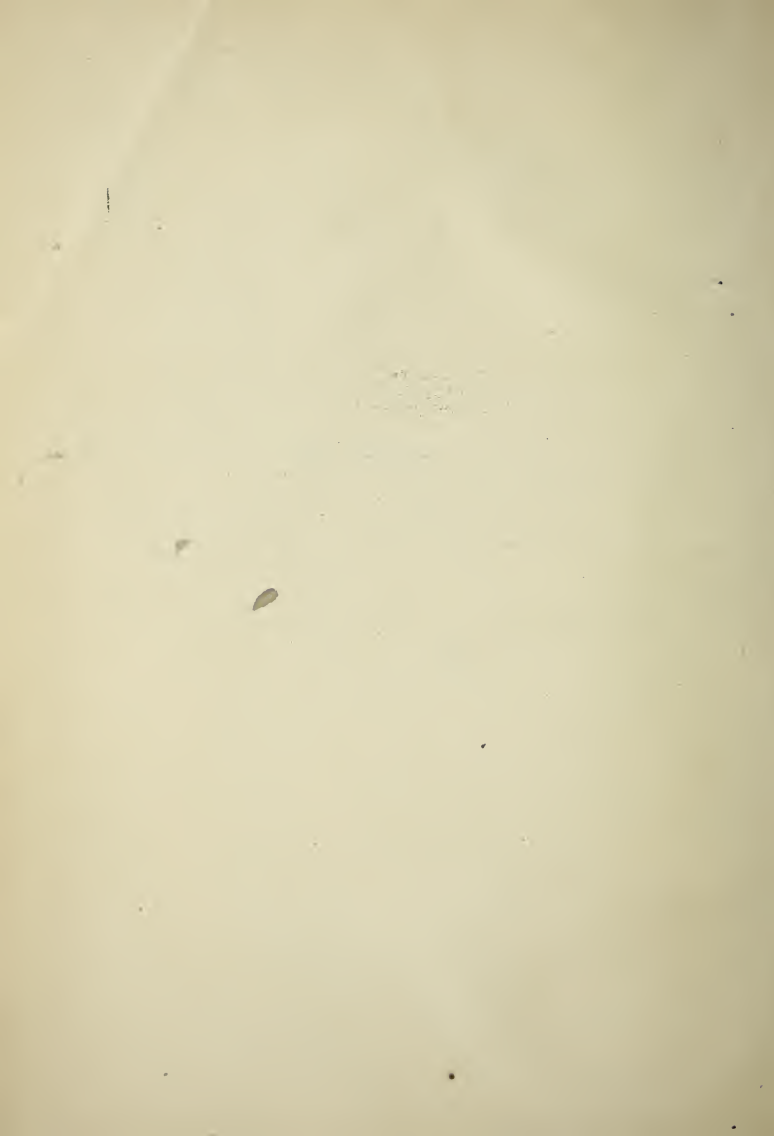
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Will C. Wood  
Boston, 77 Revere St.  
"Eagle's Nest,"

February 1895



# SHORT STUDIES

FOR

Sunday-School Teachers

BY

CHAS. S. ROBINSON D.D.

PASTOR OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BROOKLYN N. Y.



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TO

GEORGE C. RIPLEY,            HENRY IDE,  
ROBERT C. OGDEN,            ANDREW A. SMITH,  
ALEXANDER M. EARLE,

Superintendents.


THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

"These are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."—*Colossians*, iv 11.



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## P R E F A C E.

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**T**HE chapters of this unpretending volume were originally presented, each in turn, in a series of familiar addresses from the pulpit at a Sabbath afternoon service.

I have noticed quite intelligently the fact that oftentimes the lines of thought cross each other, and an admonition, an inference, or an exposition, has been repeated. This was most natural in the outset; and really I cannot see any valid reason for making a change now. I would rather have the singleness of impression from each theme, than the mere satisfaction of more finished work.

The usefulness I hope these sketches and outlines of Scriptural truth will serve is very simple. Per-

haps they will prompt some one who is weary, encourage some one who is tried; perhaps they will be suggestive to superintendents in preparing for public services; perhaps they will prove acceptable gifts for older teachers to present to younger.

And if they fail in all these ends, still it is a kind of comfort to myself—I own it—that I have made an honest, humble, prayerful effort to be of some assistance to a class of Christian workers whom I honor with my whole heart.

74 PIERREPONT STREET, BROOKLYN, N. Y., }  
December 1, 1867. }







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# SHORT STUDIES

FOR

## SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

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### I.

#### A Child's Rescue.

*"And she called his name Moses; and she said, because I drew him out of the water."—EXODUS II. 10.*

**A**BOUT four thousand years ago a little boy was saved from drowning in the Nile river. That incident forms the theme of this present discourse.

"Life," says Jean Paul, "should in every shape be precious to us; for the same reason that the Turks carefully collect each scrap of paper which comes in their way, because the name of God may be written upon it." If it were not for this name of God, possible to be written upon every human

heart, I would no more attempt to interest you in the recital of that Hebrew babe's rescue, than I would in the bursting of one of the myriad bubbles which broke against the side of the bulrush vessel he lay in.

Once, when our Saviour wanted to instruct his disciples in primary doctrine, he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them. If Pharaoh's daughter will but lend to our imagination for an hour the ark she discovered, we will place it here in full view, and make it our preacher. Our lesson shall be concerning the saving of children.

I. Let me, in the first place, recall to your minds the perils which surrounded the life which was saved on that memorable occasion.

1. It was the life of an *infant* child. Strange indeed does it seem, to think that Moses, the venerable lawgiver of the chosen people, once was a feeble babe, weak and wailing as ever was a nursing of three months in its mother's arms. Yet this was he, lying there in the reeds by the river side. Look at him a moment! Surely, he needs not to be killed in order to die. Infancy alone will extinguish that insignificant glimmer of existence.

Just leave him where he is a little longer, and you will never hear of his going up into Mount Nebo. One rush of the waves through a crevice, and the march in the wilderness will never be made. One quick gasp, as the relentless current hurries him under, and the Bible will be less by a Pentateuch.

2. It was the life of a *proscribed* child. His nation was in bondage. His mother was a slave. He was "one of the Hebrew's children." He became instantly, therefore, an outlaw. All Egypt was on the alert for his life. He was a tremendous enemy of the government that was building the pyramids! There was no room in the world for male Hebrew children when Moses was born. Aaron, his brother, got in before the door was shut. Beautiful maidens were those, doubtless, in attendance upon Egypt's princess; but between them and this foundling, socially, there was forevermore a great gulf fixed.

3. It was the life of an *outcast* child. He had no friends. His mother had already hidden him till concealment was dangerous. It must have been a hard thing for her now to put him out on the river. Sorrowful hours were those she and little Miriam

had, weaving the rushes. But this was the best they could do for him. He was as much adrift on the world as he well could be; and that at an age conceded to be unusually early. Feeble fight would he be likely to make with the hard fortunes that beset him.

You pity him: so do I, with all my heart. But I will tell you what you may pity to better purpose. There are scores of sons and daughters of misery, drifting out upon a stream of vice, which the Nile, with all its murkiness and its monsters, can not parallel for peril; a river of depraved humanity, hurrying on before it everything good and promising into the dark destiny behind the cloud. I think it high time more was doing in our Christian communities for the rescue of children.

II. Let me tell you now, in the second place, who it was that saved that life, so exposed upon the margin of the Nile.

1. Primarily, of course, God. This he has claimed for his especial office. "He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." Here was a child, orphaned while his parents were living; homeless, when his father's house was within sight; deserted,

when his own sister kept her eye upon him; an outlaw, when the princess of the realm was coming to his relief. Who put him in the midst of such contradictions? Who set all the extraordinary train of helpers in motion? He it was, into whose faithful face the Psalmist looked up as he said, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

2. Instrumentally, however, God made use of four agents in this rescue. And it is because all of us, in one way or another, can find an example among them to imitate in forwardness of zeal, that I mention them in turn.

A *believing mother* was the first of them. "By faith, Moses when he was born was hid three months of his parents." Prudence and piety were joined in the effort made for his relief. That trustful woman religiously committed her child to a covenant-keeping God. But she did all that human ingenuity could suggest to protect him. She used the means within her own reach. Then, with unwavering confidence she tranquilly awaited the issue.

A *wealthy princess* was also one of the helpers in the rescue. Pharaoh's daughter, coming down to the

water, heard the wailing voice among the rushes. When her attendants brought the curious vessel ashore, she "saw the child." The great humanity asserted itself in her breast. She felt the sincerest sympathy for a creature so forlorn. It was against the law, mind you, for her to pity him. It was "resisting the powers" to aid a little fugitive slave in those uncivilized times. But through all the meshes of conventional exclusion, through all the links of legislation, her womanly instinct found its unhindered way. And in that exalted moment the princess rose to an elevation she never surpassed. She planted herself on the rock by the side of the Creator, who "hath made of one blood all nations of men." No Christian woman, surely, ever does herself and her sex the honor that the merest self-respect requires, until she is able to free her heart from all trammels of social distinction and caste privilege, enough to cheerfully do good to any poor child of destitution and prejudice, for whom the common Redeemer has died.

An *intelligent child* was likewise one of the parties that saved Moses' life. Quite a number of useful children are mentioned in the Scripture. A little



lad furnished the loaves and fishes to feed the five thousand. A little girl led the Syrian leper to Elisha for his cure. A touching spectacle rises upon our imagination, when we think of the young Miriam, perhaps at the time four or five years old, put on guard just out of sight to keep the family informed concerning the fate of the ark. How the heart of that faithful watcher must have fluttered when she saw the royal train approaching the spot! Miriam was undoubtedly a very bright child. She appears remarkably well in this story. There is ingenuity and great shrewdness in her quick suggestion of a *nurse*—a *Hebrew* nurse—and *herself* to go and make choice of one. What is the reason children may not be trained in saving children? There is marvelous intelligence in some of them, that might be turned to unmeasured advantage, if they were taught usefulness as patiently as they are accomplishments.

An *affectionate teacher* was also among the rescuers of that infant in the ark. To be sure, this was the same woman mentioned before; but she was now discharging a different office. God's blessing brought the child back to the bosom it belonged

upon. But after this Jochebed considered her charge as belonging to Pharaoh's daughter. He was destined to enter the palace ere long. She had it for her duty to prepare him for his eminent mission. We read in the subsequent history that Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians. But it was the foundation of another sort of knowledge that was laid thus early in his career. This instructor taught him of God, of truth, of equity. And I make a point of this work of hers merely in order to say, that the mother of any child is its fittest teacher, when she can be, and when she can not, that will be its best teacher who is most like a mother.

You see now what was intended when I said that you can choose your own place among these instruments of rescue. There is a share in the saving of children to be given to the youngest and the maturest, for the pauper's child and the king's daughter. Only this much I urge earnestly: the river is rising, time hurries, the ark is exposed.

III. Let me tell you, in the third place, what was the value of that life saved in the ark of bulrushes.

Measured by any standard of earthly estimate, it would not pass for much. Indeed, why was it not better for an outcast, like that infant Moses, just to slip quietly out from under the eaves of life into the grand Hereafter at once, and die peacefully into a decenter existence than this?

Such a question suggests folly. Drowning is the poorest of all purposes to put a child to. The rescue proves the finest part of the story. One thing is certain, it has been handed down reverently through forty centuries. The child was worth something, or inspiration would not have been so carefully invoked in its favor.

1. It was worth something for its *beauty*. Stephen, in the Acts, says Moses was "exceedingly fair;" the Greek is, "fair to God," or divinely, celestially fair. There is in the countenance of a child wonderful power to move any man of sensibility. But the loveliness of infancy becomes deformed very soon in outcast children. It is a fearful sight to look upon a little, old, wise child; an infant of years, with maturity thrust upon him before his voice changes; a wiry, shrewd politician of the streets and alleys; keen and cunning after food and

raiment as a wolf, and worse off than a wolf in that he has to procure raiment. Believe me, even the artless beauty of a child is worth saving. It will be one of the dearest sights in heaven, the sweet faces of children. Angels are waiting to welcome them. They never had any. They were never children themselves. They are all of the same age. They were all created at the same time. They never marry nor are given in marriage. Half the human race die in infancy, and are saved. Oh, it is best to keep something even here to remind us of the joys of the redeemed !

2. It was worth something for its *gifts*. At this time, of course, Moses was the merest infant. Nobody believes the foolish stories which the Rabbins tell of his early precocity, or his boyish exploits. But we know from the disclosure of after history, that there were enfolded in his undeveloped intellect princely possibilities of eminence in attainment and exercise. How little we know about this question of development ! Look at your own hand ; it is as good a hand as Michael Angelo's. Why can not it paint on canvas, or carve in stone ? It is untaught and unpracticed ; but the skill is in it some-

where. So of your memory. So of your imagination. How small a moiety of any man's nature is working at its utmost power. Look out now upon these undisciplined multitudes. A shrewd manufacturer, up among the mountains, discovered a torrent that was wasting itself in irregular leaps from rock to rock; he gave it a flume to run into, and it rolled on far better for itself, and turned a tremendous wheel for him. Why does not some keen-sighted statesman or philanthropist see how much waste of power there is in this frantic struggle for life which the children of want are making?

3. It was worth something for its *preciousness*. When I look in upon the ark where Moses lies, I can not help thinking of the trustful woman that loved him enough to give him up to the risk of the waters. And I never stand before a great audience of children without saying to myself, somebody loves them. Somebody thinks that each one in turn is the best one of them all. There never was a little child, hardly, in the world that did not have, for at least one moment, a look of unutterable tenderness from the woman whose heart leaped up when she knew it was her own. Just for common

humanity's sake, then, it is worth the saving. I honor that matron who leaned over the dying soldier, and whispered, "Let me kiss him for his mother!" But beyond this, stands the great love of the Saviour for children. "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." They are immeasurably precious to him. No creature in the universe, no matter how vicious, no matter how deserted, no matter how repulsive, is so far beyond the pale of charity as to be rejected for an outcast, just so long as there is room enough on his forehead for grace to write the name of the Lamb!

4. It was worth something for its *purpose*. In every acorn there is an oak. That feeble child, lying desolately in the ark, was mightier than the sun rolling on its meridian way overhead; for the All-wise had given him a work to do under the plan of redemption. Jochebed little knew what history she was weaving when she plaited the bulrushes together. That tiny hand was one day to wield the rod of Omnipotence over the Red Sea divided, the rock riven, and Amalek routed. Let no man despise children. God sometimes charges even the youngest life with a purpose so trans

cent that the angels earnestly desire to look into it.

5. It was worth something for its *destiny*. You look at that child as it is borne up the bank in the arms of its mother. The narrative of the rescue is ended. Pharaoh's daughter has a fresh adventure to relate in the palace, to cause a wonderment for a morning. Then the recollection grows dim, and that Life so strangely saved seems to have vanished from history. Forty years pass by; and anon it reappears in the palace. There it is tempted; then it goes forth into desert experiences, and is lost in the distance. Forty more years pass by; and again you behold its return. A more splendid life the world never saw. At the head of a mighty host, its marvelous march has begun toward the promised land. Miracles drop from the extended hand. Wisdom untold is issuing from the lips inspired. Forty years more pass by; and now at last you see that life, with natural force unabated, and eye not yet grown dim, going bravely up into Mount Nebo to die. Then you have reason to believe it is fairly ended. But fifteen hundred years more pass by; and once more you suddenly discover that life on



the summit of another mountain, in the companionship of Immanuel himself, grand in all the radiance of glory, with Elijah and with God! From that Tabor-top of wonderful transfiguration it passes back to its rest, to live and reign forever. When you think of that rescued child, think of all this immortal destiny included. Even Miriam, who sang with her timbrel by the Red Sea, is living yet; and on the sea of glass will yet sing with her harp the song of Moses and the Lamb.

This, then, is the lesson we learn to-day. The salvation of a child—what is it? It seems so little, but, ah, it is so much! Let me give you just three thoughts to close with.

1. Learn the power of the great common humanity. What Pharaoh's daughter needed was, not abuse, not long exhortation, not tedious appeal, but to be told what to do. When she "saw the child," her heart spontaneously responded. Rich people are all human; most of them are humane. There is no good in judging them harshly. Tell them how.

2. Learn the best kind of monuments. Egypt's king builded the pyramids. Egypt's princess res-



cued Moses. The pyramids are out in the sands, trying mutely to perpetuate something, nobody knows what. Moses lives on! Who, then, has the truest remembrance?

3. Learn the greatest reason for thanksgiving. Thank God that you had helpers to save you when you were a child. "Saved by grace!" Oh, what a motto for a man's life! She called the infant Moses, our text says, because she drew him out of the water. Moses means "saved." Think of a child called "SAVED" for his given name! Would it ever forget its history? Well, then, is that not your name? And are you going to remember that you are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ?





## II.

### The Model Teacher.

*"Jesus, therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well, and it was about the sixth hour."*—JOHN IV. 6.

**A**N eastern traveler tells us there is in all the Holy Land only one spot which we are absolutely certain was trod by the feet of our blessed Redeemer; and that is a little area of space, within a circumference of which the center is the well of Jacob in Sychar. All other localities have been questioned, and their claims to authenticity are unsatisfactory and confused. But there our Saviour once undoubtedly rested. What a precious place it must be to visit! Few of us will ever see it with our mortal eyes; but we are going to it now, in imagination, for our instruction.

In the Scripture narrative to which this text introduces us, we find the Son of God fulfilling the

office of a teacher. Fine exemplar is he for us to imitate. Let us trace out the incidents of the story to the end, so as to ascertain, if possible, the secret of his success. For, strange as it seems to think of it, his entire class was converted that day. We find here illustrated three characteristics: zeal, tact, and spirituality.

I. Observe the Saviour's Zeal. You may see this everywhere in our Lord's life, but here it is more evident than usual. It is shown in four particulars:

1. He went to a most unwelcome neighborhood. There was nothing to attract him there, everything to repel. All his hereditary prejudices were arrayed against the Samaritans. The Jews had no dealings with them. They were a proud, supercilious set of people. They called themselves orthodox, and then did as they pleased. Yet, when the whole world was open for his effort, our Lord "must needs go through Samaria."

2. He was satisfied to teach only one scholar. A woman came to him, and that was all his class. He who had preached to vast multitudes, sat down there, under the hot noon, with patient fidelity, to

instruct even a single hearer. He spoke just as kindly, and talked to her just as eloquently, as he did to the ten thousand afterward. You know she had a soul; and when there was a soul to toil for, for that soul Jesus always toiled.

3. He labored with a disagreeable pupil. This woman was a great sinner. She seems not to have had even one creditable point of character. She was notoriously profligate (verse 17). She was pert (verse 19). She was argumentative (verse 12). She was a liar (verse 18). The disciples wondered, when they came back, that Jesus spoke to the impudent creature (verse 27). And she even wondered herself (verse 9). It was effrontery unparalleled for her to talk as she did. She was conceited and brazen. She does not exhibit the slightest sign of modesty or shame. Yet it is wonderful to note the forbearance with which Jesus treats her all the time.

4. He was himself wearied with work when he began. One little word there is in our text that you rarely think of when you read it over; the word "*thus*." He sat *thus* to teach; that is, all worn out just as he was on the long, hard journey;

hungry, tired, thirsty, over-heated, and alone. Yet you see no sign of this; he talks cheerfully on as ever.

Well then, when *you* are wearied of hard neighborhoods; when your mission fields try you; when you put yourself out to go far through the rain or the sun, and find your class thinned down to two or three; when you are thoroughly discouraged over some vicious pupil, who annoys you almost beyond patience; when you are fatigued with care, or jaded with unrewarded labor;—then just remember the MASTER, there in that despised spot, with his one scholar, and she a hateful, bad woman, earnestly trying to do her good, and forgetting the hunger and heat that oppressed him.

II. Observe the Saviour's Tact. That case required a great deal of wisdom to manage it exactly. And the shrewdness with which he interested the woman, and the adroitness with which he finally made his impression—that was his *tact*. There is no successful teaching without tact. It is worth while to mark this example carefully. The tact of Jesus is shown in this instance in two particulars.

1. He was ingenious in *catching* an illustration to interest her mind (verse 7). He took her water-

pot for his text. How characteristic this aptness always was of Christ! When the fishermen drew in their wonderful wealth of fishes, he said to them they should become "fishers of men" (Matthew iv. 19). When the multitudes followed him for the sake of the loaves, he said to them he was the "bread of life" (John vi. 35). The true way to teach is just this—try to link what one does not know upon what he knows.

2. He was quick in *turning* the illustration, so as to impress her conscience (verse 14). Jesus knew he gained nothing until he made that woman feel that she was a sinner. Indeed, this is the essential thing for every gospel teacher to do. The Bible is intended to lead men to the cross. But the human intellect is dull, and the human heart is hard. The mind must be arrested, and then the conscience must be aroused.

Now the difficulty *you* experience, perhaps, covers both these points. You can neither catch similitudes, nor use them. One thing is very certain: the heart has more to do with teaching the gospel than most people are aware of. If you really desire to do good, you will find God will

favor you in ingenuity. McCheyne, standing before a forge-fire, said kindly to the workman—"Who can dwell with everlasting burnings!" Payson, when his seat-mate in the coach expressed gladness that the journey was so near its end, put the inquiry, "Are you prepared for the end of the long journey?"

III. Observe the Saviour's Spirituality. He made that entire interview religious. The purpose of her conversion lay uppermost in his mind. This is shown in his avoiding what she wanted him to do, and in his doing what he did.

1. He carefully avoided all discussion of irrelevant matters. And the more you study the story, the more plainly you will perceive how much patience this implied. Like all other sinners, the woman wanted to talk about something else.

She proposed *sectarian* questions (verse 9). The first thing she did was to fly off upon the differences between Mount Zion and Mount Gerizim. But our Lord pays not even the compliment of a notice to her polemic hint. He does not mention the Samaritan tenets in the whole interview. He talks only of the "gift of God" (verse 10).



She suggested *ritualistic* points (verse 20). She was ferociously firm about the non-essentials. Our Lord baffles her again by the quietest of all evasions. He will not argue any subtle distinctions concerning forms of worship. Calmly he throws himself back on principles underlying all such discussions, and urges the true "spirit" (verse 24).

She ventured on *speculative* inquiries (verse 25). It is curious to observe how she found herself befogged in her own dogmatism, and majestically referred the question she had raised to the Messiah! How she must have been startled to hear her teacher declare, "I that speak to you am He!" (verse 26).

2. He pressed home the one lesson persistingly, which he wanted her to learn. She found herself thwarted in every endeavor to ward off the rebuke she deserved. One all-embracing purpose was in our Saviour's mind during the whole conversation: to make her discover her sin, feel its guilt, and come penitently for pardon.

He told her the exact state of her case. She was a dreadfully wicked woman. It was needful she should see that clearly. No delicacy, no dif-



fidence, no fear of offense, kept back the truth on his lips. She was to repent of *her* sins. It is false in fact, and recreant in spirit, to call either men, women, or children, "innocent." They cannot be redeemed if they are. There is no salvation offered to such. Christ came into the world to make atonement for sinners, not for innocent people. The very argument he presses in order to show his love for children is found in their sins. "The Son of Man is come to save that which was *lost*." He is talking of "little ones" when he says that (Matthew xviii. 10).

He told her of the demands of God's law. He never thought it necessary to lower even one requisition, or precept, or commandment, in order to win favor with a proud heart. No doubt, that thoughtless, imperious creature was exceedingly difficult to manage. But there was no kindness to her in covering up her sinfulness. She was ignorant: then she must learn. She was fractious: then she must submit. She was exposed to the wrath of an offended God: then she must be warned. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth

may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

He told her of the Redeemer's help. Only hints of this conversation are here given us. The general points of instruction are all that the Evangelist records. No one tells the story but John, the beloved disciple; and John was not present. Jesus must have repeated the incidents of the interview to him afterward; and so they appear here in brief. But all the essentials of the plan of salvation are detailed. Our Saviour taught the woman how to come to himself, and be saved by faith.

When *your* class gets the better of you in the recitation, and in spite of all your efforts draws you away into wordy disputes, think of the MASTER, with his one pupil; and never forget how indefatigably he kept her to the point, just by talking to her concerning her own soul's salvation. Remember, always, it is not *what we say* about the truth, that converts a soul, but the *truth*. And surely no teacher is making any real advance, unless he brings the great triangle of doctrine in personal contact with the life and conscience of each person. Rowland Hill was wont to say, there must be "the

three R's" in every sermon—Ruin, Righteousness and Renewal.

It is time to end this sermon, or you will not think it short. But suffer me to mention a few reflections, which you may dwell upon at your will.

1. How noble an office is that which Christ here accepted! God never suffered an angel to be a teacher. No one could lead a soul to him but his own Son, and those who are like him. God makes none but his children teachers of children.

2. No person is beyond the reach of true Christian zeal. Was there ever a more unpromising scholar than that one Jesus had there by the well of Jacob in Sychar?

3. The real object of teaching truth is the conversion of souls. The mind may be reformed, the manners cultivated; but the class is a failure unless the conscience is reached, the will is broken, and the heart bowed in penitence at the foot of the cross.

4. How few Christians are just Christ-like! Oh, that great, brave Life, that spent its energies in doing good! And we are troubled when under slightest inconvenience. The ancient band of Re-

demptorists took for their motto—"All for thee, blessed Jesus, all for thee!"

5. How helpful is the encouragement to be drawn from such an instance as this! Our Saviour used no peculiar instrument in conversion; only the same truth he has put in our hands freely. If it saved that woman, who is there it cannot save?

6. The ministry of réconciliation needs this zeal, and tact, and spirituality of the MASTER. Ministers are only Sabbath-school teachers with larger classes. Said the sainted Brainerd, "Oh, that I were a flaming fire in the service of my God!"





### III.

## The Model Pupil.

*"The woman then left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?"—JOHN IV. 28, 29.*

**T**HIS woman of Samaria was converted by the personal disclosure of the Lord Jesus to her mind and heart as the Redeemer. The crisis of her history was reached at the point when, in reply to her suggestion as to an expected Messiah, the Saviour suddenly made the overwhelming announcement: "I that speak to you am He!"

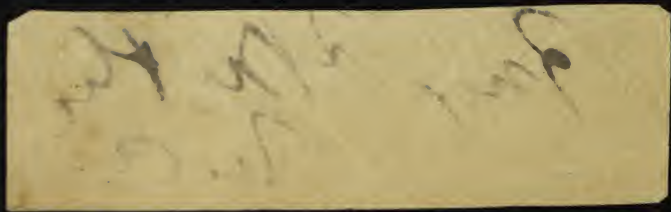
Spiritual conversion consists in the revelation of Christ to the human soul, in the instant when it has begun to feel the pressure of its imminent need. And practical conversion consists in the immediate surrender of the entire being to Christ as the Prince of Life. Both of these are luminously exhibited in the case of this poor creature, who came to Jacob's

well with nothing of her own but her sins and her water-pot, and departed without either, having received a new hope in her heart.

We have been over part of this story before, seeking the characteristics of Jesus as a teacher in a class of one. We return to it again to find that his pupil becomes a teacher in her turn, and sets an example worthy of commendation. The two particulars to be studied now are the spirit she manifested, and the work she undertook.

I. This woman must have possessed considerable force of character. From the beginning to the end of the remarkable dialogue recorded here, you can not fail to notice how skillfully she employed that much-abused member, which the Psalmist calls his "glory." Her tongue becomes to us the index of her temper throughout, and follows it unerringly during all its changes. At first, she was sharp, pert, and argumentative; but before the conversation ends, she is really an altered woman. The spirit she manifests has assumed a kind of positive attractiveness. You will see this, if you mark carefully her docility, her decision, and her devotion, remembering all the time who she was.

My Mother  
in C





1. Her *docility* becomes apparent at the moment when she asks her first favor of Christ. "The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me of this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."

You will be surprised, I am sure, to learn here that some commentators of high repute have seemed to understand that she was only proposing to Jesus that he should relieve her from her usual daily burden of coming out there so far for water from that well. And some others of equal intelligence have declared she was spitefully turning the Saviour's figure back upon him with the utmost bitterness of sarcasm. But it is difficult to discover either the ignorance or the malevolence which a mistake like the first of these interpretations, or a sneer like the second, would imply. If you read the whole dialogue, you will observe how abruptly the early flippancy of this woman collapses into a real sense of desire. Her question must have been sincere, although somewhat unintelligent. Her mind was fairly arrested. Her sensibilities were moved. And even if her yearnings were vague, because she was both vicious and unenlightened,

yet her conscience was touched, and she truly began to sigh for a better life.

Good step forward is that for any teacher, when, the pert assumption of superiority all gone, his pupil just comes frankly admitting need, and says: "Help me." For at once, then, does the promise begin to bear with all its precious pressure. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."

2. Her *decision* becomes apparent at the moment when the wondering disciples returned, and beheld her talking with the Master. Singular picture is that which rises upon our imagination, when we read the slight record: "And upon this came his disciples, and marveled that he talked with the woman; yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?"

There they hesitatingly stood, looking from one to the other, convinced that something was unusual, if not wrong; yet not one venturing a comment, or making an inquiry. Reverence kept them silent; but so bright a woman as that must have discerned from their glances how much they disapproved of her presence, and how much concerning her conduct

they mistrusted. If no higher feeling than mere curiosity had prompted her stay, one might think her footsteps of departure would have lingered until she could learn something more of this strange personage who had disclosed himself as the Anointed of God. But the remarkable part of her conduct is found in the unhesitating compliance with which she hastened on her errand away. Her promptness knew not even a moment's delay; she silently withdrew without an inquiry.

More important step forward still is that for a teacher, when his pupil's mind is full and his heart is absorbed; and with not one cavil at difficult doctrine, he fixes his eye steadfastly upon the duty of the instant, and seeks only to perform it. Things are all going well when any awakened sinner honestly says: "I thought upon my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."

3. Her *devotion* becomes apparent at the moment when she set out upon her humiliating errand. One little touch of naturalness there is in the story, which shows the care exercised in gathering up all the fragments of historic truth in the Scriptures,

that nothing might be lost: "The woman then left her water-pot and went her way."

You need not be afraid of forcing this casual mention of a striking fact, if you think that in it is found one of the finest evidences of her conversion. The vessel she forsook was to her a costly sacrifice. Whether she expected to ever regain it we have no hint; she certainly risked its loss among strangers. Few Jews were there then who deemed it necessary to keep faith with her nation. The act appears precisely like the surrender of customs, when Matthew became a disciple; like the forsaking of the nets when Simon left all in order to follow Christ; like Bartimeus' casting away his outer garment that he might hurry to Jesus. The motive of this woman is not stated, but conjecture is easy. Perhaps her mind was so occupied with the stupendous disclosure she had listened to that she deemed this mere item of loss insignificant. Perhaps her desire to do good was so earnest that she feared even the accustomed burden balanced on her head might hinder her haste. Perhaps her sense of gratitude was so affectionate that she willingly left her valuable vessel for the convenience of those whom she knew

to be unsupplied with any means to quench their thirst. Whatever was her motive, the act artlessly evidences that she had begun to devote her all to her newly disclosed Friend.

True religious zeal loves to write Jesus' name on each of its most treasured possessions; and you may begin to feel very happy when one of your pupils inquires how he can do something for Christ.

Thus much concerning the spirit which this woman, nameless and unhistoric, manifested. Rebecca found a husband, and Moses found a wife, from a mere visit at a well-side; but this Samaritan convert found that which was better than either. The Holy Ghost had said to her there, in that sultry hour: "Thy Maker is thine husband—the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel!" And in the mystery of her spiritual espousal, she became endowed with graces richer and rarer than the golden gifts with which the servant of Abraham adorned Isaac's beautiful bride.

II. We come now, in the second place, to consider the work this woman undertook. The exact words of our text are in point. Connect with them,

however, the remainder of the narrative, and you will discover these three particulars: the field she selected, the instrument she employed, and the success she achieved.

1. Observe how singular was the field she selected. It was actually the hardest in the world for her to enter. Certain necessities and accessories of duty there are almost always, which help to decide concerning its character. Just look at these details here.

She went where *her story* would certainly be unwelcome. It was a Samaritan city, and, knowing exactly how violent were their prejudices, she was going to tell them that their previous traditions were untrue; Gerizim was the wrong mountain; they had worshiped they knew not what; salvation was really of the Jews.

She went where *her message* would be unwelcome. This was an exceedingly wicked city. Many of the people were no better than she was. She had before her the task of arousing their consciences, as well as of convincing their minds. She must needs prove to them that God was a spirit, and they that would worship him must worship him in

spirit and in truth. If she should succeed in drawing forth any adherents, she knew that Jesus would attack their sins first, just as he did hers. Hitherto it had been considered quite sufficient in Samaria to hold orthodox views concerning the two versions of the Pentateuch. It seems to have mattered little how many husbands a person had, or how she got them; the thing to be sound upon was the disputed mountain they swore by.

She went where *her sex* would be unwelcome. The record seems explicit; she addressed herself "to the men." Men never love to be exhorted by women. They loved it less in old times than now. They loved it less among those eastern nations than we do here. The old Rabbins had a maxim that read in this way: "Talking with a woman is one of the six things which make a disciple impure."

She went where *herself* would be peculiarly unwelcome. It was her own city. Some of those men did not know her. It is always difficult to speak of personal religion to strangers. Young converts are generally as diffident as they are zealous. But some of those men did know her—alas! too well. If there had been as many good men in



Sodom as that woman had had husbands, first and last, in Sychar, God would never have depressed the Dead Sea to its present level, and Lot would never have been driven out by a shower of fire. This person must have been understood in those precincts. Six of her hearers, at least, had somewhat intimate acquaintance with her antecedents. All this made her errand awkward and hard.

2. Observe, however, how simple was the instrument she employed. The entire sermon she preached is found in the compact verses of the text. Analyze it for a moment, that you may remark its frankness, its earnestness, and its ingenuity.

She frankly acknowledged that her own *sins* were discovered. "All that ever I did"—that covered a great deal of biographic ground. Without making any pretensions of fitness as a moral teacher, she disarmed their earliest prejudices by an honest confession that he had found her out on the instant. She had said, "Give me the living water!" He answered, "Go, call thy husband!" Was that bringing a serpent to one who asked for an egg? Not so; remember always that conviction of sin is the first answer of grace to a sinner.



She earnestly professed that her own *faith* had been won; yet she put it delicately in the fashion of a question, "Is not this the Christ?" So bold an avowal must have cost her much. Perils, as well as reproaches, surrounded apostates in those days. She was fairly defying the tenets of all her previous training. Solemn moment is that always, when, out from a circle of worldlings and unbelievers, comes one whose heart has been touched by the Spirit, taking a stand on the Saviour's side, and modestly accepting his cross!

She ingeniously brought her own *experience* to bear upon them, and thus converted her most manifest reproach into an argument. "All that ever I did"—not what he did; no relation of sublime disclosures, only a mere admission of discovery. She appealed to what they would have said in censure. She said in the touching refrain we sometimes sing, "*Even me!*" And then they knew there must be something in it. That was all she said. Her message ended where the Gospel ends. The Bible has only one word for mortals to speak; that was the exact word she used—"Come." In the Greek it is an adverb of beckoning—"Hither!"

That is the royal call. Christ is waiting just without; we enter and say—hither!

3. Observe how extraordinary was the success she achieved. I need not trace this out at length; the record will speak for itself. One woman seems to have moved an entire city. Jesus was rejected of his kinsmen, she was accepted of hers; he was threatened in Nazareth, she was heeded in Sychar. The last became first, and the first last. All this illustrates the wonderful sovereignty of God.

She made *many* converts. They listened and obeyed immediately. "Then they went out of the city, and came unto him." The acquiescence was instantaneous. Did any one ever hear of even the least good gained by delay in the going to Jesus?

She made many *true* converts. "Many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman which testified, He told me all that ever I did." You see it was her own experience which carried the day. A large number seem to have been spiritually renewed that very afternoon. Why do many good people feel so suspicious over sudden conversions? The sudden

conversions in the Bible are all safer than the tardy ones.

She made many *useful* converts. They went right to work, urging others to come to Jesus. "He abode there two days, and many more believed, because of his own word; and said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Does any one suppose that this woman felt grieved to learn that they heard and trusted and loved Jesus, no longer for her sake, but for his own?

Here the history closes. We know no more of this Samaritan convert. She passes away as silently as she appeared; but the lesson of her life lingers. What shall it be to us?

1. Learn, first, that no great talent is needed to do good. Who could have predicted such success for such a creature? It is piety, not education; it is spirituality, not culture; it is experience, not learning, which God uses in conversion of souls. Yet with piety pervading, all these gifts may be made to help.

2. Learn, second, that all glory of true usefulness belongs to Christ. What became of this woman? History drops her when her work is done. One of the old Fathers records that she was named Photina, that she preached at Carthage, that she was martyred in one of the African persecutions, and that he saw her head, which is now kept as a relic in Rome, in the church of St. Paul! Pretty well that, for a hierarchy that honors woman more than Christ! To canonize this convert, however, seems to have been a little harder than common.

3. Learn, also, that the nearest field of usefulness is often the best. Many people spend half a life-time looking for their vocation, while God is speaking almost audibly to them: Begin *at home*. The prophet utters a most significant admonition—"that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh." Do you remember how kindly our Lord dismisses the man out of whom he had cast the legion of devils, and who wanted to remain with him? "Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

4. Learn that there are occasions in which women

may be even more useful than men. They have more tact. They have more fervency. They have more fortitude. It was a mean Jewish proverb which said—"He who instructs his daughter in the Law plays the fool." We ought to have outgrown that long ago. This woman had a clearer perception than any Jew Christ had yet found; for she understood him as the Teacher, and they all demanded him as a King.

5. Learn, likewise, that common-place self-denial sometimes becomes one of the clearest evidences of grace. To leave a water-pot for a thirsty disciple *may* possibly show a thoughtfulness which is the fruit of the Spirit; while to surrender a fortune may only show a temper or mood which is the offspring of ostentation and pride. Simon made an expensive feast for Jesus; but the most acceptable part of the entertainment consisted in the unannounced generosity of a poor woman, who crept in without invitation and broke her box of alabaster lovingly upon the head of her Saviour.

6. Learn that new converts have certainly a fair field of usefulness in the instruction of others. Even the conservative Calvin remarks on this pas-

sage: "She would have acted inconsiderately if she had assumed the office of a teacher; but when she desires nothing more than to excite her fellow-citizens to *hear Christ speaking*, we will not say that she forgot herself, or proceeded further than she had a right to do; she merely does the office of a trumpet or a bell, to invite others to come to Christ."

7. Learn once more that the peculiar privilege of "him that heareth" is that he may say, "Come." He who temporizes will be like Demas, who forsook Paul for the present world; he who calculates will be like Ananias, who kept back part of the price; he who covets will be like Achan, who cleaved hope from his soul with a golden wedge. But he who gives himself *wholly* to Christ will be honored as an usher in his service, opening the door of his kingdom to his sons.

8. Learn, finally, that the best memorial of any one is found in the souls he has won to the cross. For there begins a line of perpetual usefulness that can never end. The Empress Helena built a church, at vast expense, over this well of Jacob. But the proud edifice crumbled many a long year

ago. The rubbish of it clogs the water-course even to the present day. What has preserved the spot is the memory of a nameless woman, who was converted there. And while the world stands it will remain thus sacred and unforgotten, actually the only spot in Palestine authentic, as having once had the presence of the Divine Teacher and his Samaritan pupil.







#### IV.

### Words to the Weary.

*"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.—ISAIAH L. 4.*

**I** HAVE happened in my reading upon a description of the hieroglyphics by which the ancient Egyptians represented alms-giving. A naked child was feeding honey to a bee; and in the child's hand was a heart; and the bee had lost its wings.

The details of this symbol will bear analysis. It was a child—in order to mark the guilelessness of spirit which lies at the center of all true charity. The child was naked—to show that, possessing nothing of his own, he was willing to be the humble almoner of some higher power. It was honey he was feeding away—in order to denote that he was bestowing what would have been sweet to him.



self, but was indispensable to the bee. The heart was in his hand—to indicate the warm sympathy and affection prompting the service. It was a bee he fed, not a wasp, nor a butterfly, nor a drone—in order to suggest that only a faithful worker deserved help from self-denial, however generous. But the bee was wingless now—to intimate that a time might come when even industry would fail, and the most willing life would be in the straits of positive exigency.

And now, although this was the fancy of a merely heathen imagination, I present it for your study as the finest picture I have met of gospel grace and duty, especially as exemplified in the work of a true Sunday-school teacher. It precisely embodies the meaning of the text upon which we are to dwell: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

Here we find stated in explicit terms, first, the Objects of Christian zeal, and, secondly, the Instrument for its exercise.

I. Among all the names applied in the Scripture to the OBJECTS of Christian zeal, I know of none

more comprehensive and affecting than that here employed—"him that is weary."

1. Some are weary through *toil*. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening." It is not easy for us in our sumptuous homes to quite appreciate the unutterable disgust one would be likely to acquire for the ceaseless iterations of a narrow calling. Men there are who spend forty years in fashioning pin-points or drilling needles' eyes. Children there are who grow old and deformed picking off the flocks of cotton from the running web of a mill. And these people become tired, and say in words older than they imagine: "What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? All things are full of labor; man can not utter it: the thing that hath been it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." The world is full of human machines; yet with this difference, machines are not disgusted, and they often are.

2. Some are weary through *trial*. A brave man may accept with all submission the lot which God gives to him, and yet now and then lift the prayer,

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord! for I am weak; I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears." We think it hard to lose a child; there are those who think it really harder to be unable to educate and clothe their children. We think it hard to have a wife an invalid; there are those who think it harder to be obliged to stand by and know their wives are hungry, and feeble, and sick, and yet can not help it.

3. Some are weary through *neglect*. They feel alone in the universe. They look around anxiously for an opening, as Joseph and Mary did in the celebrated inn at Bethlehem; there was no place then for the mother of Jesus except in the stable. On this planet there never has been any room for poor people. The population seems to them exceedingly dense. Somebody received title to all the land before they were born. "As for the mighty man, he has the earth, and the honorable man dwells in it." And the world is so full of mighty men, not to mention the honorable, that between them working men find the space most amazingly used up. They go up to what seems a

friendly guide-board, modestly to ask the way; it turns out to be a fierce warning against trespassing on some one's premises. And after one has wandered around in the night awhile, within the precincts of a Christian city, without finding any lodging, will it be any surprise if he becomes slightly heterodox? And as he looks up overhead, and sees only that dome of the sky, blue as if made out of steel, and glittering with bosses of brass, will it be strange if he murmurs: "Behold the height of the stars! How high they are! How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud?" Would *you* be able to reason any better?

4. Some are weary through *sin*. Some are even weary of sin, and would forsake it if they knew how. "The candle of the wicked shall be put out;" so we preach to them with sepulchral warnings of God's wrath. They believe it; but then it very naturally seems to them that they will be left any way in the dark if they put it out themselves, unless we preach a little further on in the doctrine. "The way of the transgressor is hard;" they know that as well as the wise man who wrote the Proverbs; they are quite tired of it already. Tossed

about upon the billows of a tempestuous experience, they hear now and then a call—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." They start up at that strange sound, as the beggar Bartimeus started up at the gates of Jericho, and with passionate earnestness straining their eyes, pitifully blind, they ask what it means. I fear there are yet in the world disciples dull enough to answer even such needy creatures, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by," and then turn with violence to charge them that they hold their peace. Thus the "labor of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go into the city."

Now all these classes of weary persons, I am sure, are meant to be included in the specification of the text. They are the real objects of Christian zeal under the gospel. The glad office of Christ's followers is to aid and to succor them. The Sunday-school organization, with its appliances for visiting, instructing, and mission-working, aims at them.

II. The question arises at once, of course, how this work is to be done. And that leads on to our

second matter of consideration, namely, the INSTRUMENT which is to be employed: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." Now there are three suggestions here in one: the feebleness of the instrument in appearance, the secret of its incontrovertible power, and the condition of success in its use.

1. The instrument does seem insignificant. Over against all this aggregate of human need, it is soberly proposed to set the exercise of one of our commonest endowments—*speech*. A word—and yet "a word fitly chosen is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." What is a word? We speak a thousand and mind nothing of the waste. Yet God used only one to make all the world. He stood over the ocean of immensity, and said to an uncreated universe, BE! And forthwith it sprang into existence, majestic and finished, like a new island in the shoreless sea. To us one word seems nothing; we fling them around in careless luxuriance; we point a moral with them, we adorn a tale with them; we shorten them, we lengthen them, we mispronounce them, just to make them musical,

or force them into rhyme ; we play pranks on them, construct riddles for children out of them ; we fire sarcasms with them, turn compliments with them, and put them for stings into the end of a reproach. And yet our Saviour comforted Martha, taught Mary, and raised Lazarus, with a word.

2. There is, then, a secret of power somewhere in this instrument. The emphasis of our text falls on the expression, "a word *in season*." The force does not reside in the syllables, but in the opportuneness of the utterance. There is an exigency of moral need brought on by the Spirit of grace. There are crises in the history of most persons in this world, when the soul pauses, as if poised on the very pinnacle of decision. It is settling some one of the grand questions of life and eternity. *Now* almost any thing will turn it one way or another way. Then some slight preponderating impression is made. "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." This is why the Psalmist so often calls his tongue his "glory." The wonderful power of our Saviour's discourses is discovered just here. Ah ! but you say, never man spake like this man ; we find no such words on our lips



as Jesus used. Why yes, my true yoke-fellow, indeed you can find such; and not only such words as Jesus uttered, but the very words. He defeated Satan in the wilderness with three verses of Deuteronomy, just to show you and me how much lightning-like force there is in one of those old books of Moses. You have all of them—the Pentateuch, the prophets, and the apostles likewise; and beyond that, the exact words of the Master in the Gospels.

3. One thing, however, needs to be noted closely as a condition of success in the use of this instrument of speech; there is a caution intimated in the text. We can not always know what to say, or how to say it, by intuition. The Lord God gives “the tongue of the *learned*,” that each of us should “*know how to speak a word in season.*” Now this does not mean great scholarship, as the world terms it. This learning comes from the Word of God for its text-book, and the spirit of prayer for its acquisition.

A Sunday-school worker needs to be thus “learned” in his *intellect*. That is, he must be intelligent in the Scriptures; for, you observe, it is God’s promises that do the work of helping and



saving, not ours. Hence it is that "the heart of the righteous *studieth* to answer." No wonder that Job for once lost his patience when those miserable comforters of his compelled him to exclaim: "How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove!" Let the word of God dwell richly in you. Thus many an uneducated and even illiterate believer becomes, like Apollos, "mighty in the Scriptures;" he waters as worthily as even a Paul could plant.

A Sunday-school worker needs to be "learned" in his *sensibilities*. That is, he must be sympathetic in his applications of the truth to individual cases. His heart must be in his offering. The essential element of this kind of usefulness consists in its cordiality, its community of spirit, its recognition of the great common humanity. Remember there are just as many notes to the octave in the poor blind man's violin at your door, as in your daughter's harp gleaming with its gold in your parlor. Prejudice must be broken down with courtesy. The self-respect of those you benefit ought carefully to be kept up. Hence a word, kind, womanly, brotherly, is sometimes worth more than even ex-

traordinary benefactions. "Weary" people are on the look-out for superciliousness. They get a good deal of it. They suspect arrogance naturally. But every barrier is leveled when they feel a fraternal grasp. Pride disappears from the defiant eye of poverty when they see the heart in the hand which is feeding the wingless bee.

A Sunday-school worker needs to be "learned" in his *judgment*. That is, he must be unaffectedly patient, and unsuspicious, and long-suffering, and charitable in his estimates of those to whom he attempts to speak a word in season. We are often so annoyed by sham pretensions of wretchedness that we fall into the habit of looking on all these street-stragglers as if they were only fit subjects for penitentiary discipline. Some of them are, but it is cruel to class all poor people promiscuously together. Ask many a Christian to visit with you in the destitute neighborhoods where you go for mission scholars. You will find yourself obliged to keep checking him often in the midst of a well-meant but most preposterous lecture. He counsels morality, as if they were thieves. He advises church-going, when he would be thunderstruck to find one

of them in his pew, and when they have not the decencies of clothing to appear in the house of God. He hopes they keep the Sabbath; he is sorrowfully surprised to find the children without Testaments. Now you happen to know he is all wide of the mark, yet not one member of the family will tell him so. He is welcome to his impression of them, only it makes them feel spitefully toward visitors. It is hard to be misjudged, hard to be considered vicious, because one is very poor.

A Sunday-school worker needs to be "learned" in his *experience*. That is, he must feel in his own heart the blessed comforts of God's grace before he can bring them effectively to others. The picture which the old poet Chaucer long years ago drew of a faithful minister is worth quoting to you, for it is just in point:

"He paid no court to pomps or reverence,  
Nor spiced his conscience at his soul's expense;  
But Jesus' love which owns no pride or pelf,  
He taught—but *first he followed it himself.*"

Let us remember, once for all, that it is not mere fine intellectual power of adaptation of truth to subtle needs of the soul which does good, but spirit-

ual and experimental knowledge, derived from personal reception of the truth. The untaught Peruvians cured many a fever with their bitter bark through the centuries before any one of them knew it was only the quinine in it that made the medicine. He who had been helped gave what had helped him to his neighbor. I suppose it is always true that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" but never is it truer than when one is trying to "speak a word in season to him that is weary."

Thus much for an exposition of the text. There remains no space here for an application, but I will add hints for those who desire it.

1. You find here a test of *church efficiency*. These words were primarily spoken of Christ. That pronoun "ME" in the text refers to him. And he accepted them. See Luke iv. 14-22. Hence all true Christianity centers here. An ancient skeptic thought he was annihilating the faith once delivered to the saints when he said: "Christianity is the religion of the sorrowful." Indeed, that is its glory, and one would think there was room enough in the world for it, too. Our text constitutes the proc

lamation of an evangelic system. See Matthew xi. 2-6. Hence, back on any church, of whatever name, of whatever diversity of ritual or form of creed, falls this vital question, demanding immediate answer: *Does it preach the gospel to the poor?* Is it speaking words in season to him that is weary?

2. You discover here likewise the depth of *individual obligation*. You are poor; you are uneducated; you are busy. The point is, you have a tongue, and you can make it learned enough, by God's blessing, to be eminent in services of usefulness. The pious Rutherford wrote to one of his friends: "Madam, it is part of *the truth of your profession* that you drop words into the ear of your husband continually of eternity, judgment, death, hell, and heaven." The truth plants itself in our own experience; on peril of our piety we are set at this blessed work. The hope of heaven makes upon us the sharpest of all possible demands. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: *To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep one's self unspotted from the world.*"

3. You learn here, also, the *extraordinary privilege* God has given his children in the form of their service of him. The lightning strikes, the pestilence kills, war desolates, and all these are instruments of his to do the divine will. But we have only the beneficence to scatter, the mercy to exhibit, the love to bring, the sweet welcome work in all this weary world to do. And, oh! what a comfort the reminiscences of fidelity become when one finds himself withdrawn suddenly from the power of working! In that terrible hour of his adversity, remember how Job consoled himself: "Oh! that I were as in months past. When the ear heard me, then did it bless me; and when the eye saw me, then it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

4. You are taught here, moreover, to *stir up the gift of God* that is within you. Some people think that there is a mysterious miraculousness in this ability to speak, either in conference, teaching, condolence, or prayer. Not so at all; speech is one

of the most common-place endowments in the world. But it needs stimulant and skill. Poor Jeremiah once said: "Ah! Lord God, behold, I can not speak, for I am a child." Moses once said: "O my Lord, I am not eloquent; I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." But it turned out that both of these men were able to do something. Perhaps you are getting "weary" yourself, and need a "word in season." Be not weary in well-doing. The time has not yet arrived for you to enter the land "where the weary are at rest:" let us labor lest we enter not in.





## V.

### Life for Life.

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."—JOHN XII. 24, 25.*

**O**UR Saviour is here talking of himself. He has been instructing his disciples concerning the ignominy of his coming departure. Yet he does not seem to consider the fact of it a misfortune, nor the manner of it a shame. His words intimate triumph. "The hour is come," he says, "that the Son of Man should be glorified."

1. The *philosophy* of a contradiction so startling he now goes on to explain. It consisted in the revelation and development of a higher life in the instant of ruin to a lower. His earthly existence covered the principle of an existence celestial and



divine. He was to become the life of men by dying in their place.

2. The *illustration* he employs to exhibit his thought is one drawn from familiar experience. He says to those simple-minded hearers: Take any common seed, such as a sower carries. Examine it carefully. Its productiveness is now all out of sight, enveloped and imprisoned by the remnants of last year's harvest. It will grow, if it is planted; but the present form of it will disappear in the growing. It must die to live. The dry habiliments of a former existence are coarsely inclosing all its promise of a new. It has to perpetuate itself by destruction. Out of the present condition it wears it must utterly perish, in order that it may reappear in the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear. Activity out of inertness, increase out of singleness, are to be secured only by reproduction out of ruin. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

3. The *application* of this figure is made immediately. The Saviour seems to say of himself: I must die in order to live. I am set for the fall and

rising again of many in Israel, and must therefore fall and rise again. I left heaven to save men. I must perfect my purpose by dying in their behalf. God's only-begotten Son must be crucified that God's many redeemed sons may be brought to glory. Life for life; this is the price, the penalty, and the payment.

4. The *reach* of the rule is now extended, so as to make it embrace, not only his life, but that of each one of those for whom his offering was to become available. He avows this as the fixed principle of the entire plan of redemption; *life for life*; life of the lower sort sacrificed without reserve for the sake of life of the higher. "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

II. This seems to be the true exposition of our text. But it does not stand alone. And so anxious am I that this rule of the gospel should be recognized clearly, as the basis of the counsel I desire to press, that I offer the corroboration which our Lord himself presents, a little farther in detail. On three other occasions he repeats the same gen-

eral form of representation, with only slightly varying direction as to its aim.

1. Once, when he was in the region of Cæsarea Philippi, he was advising his disciples seriously concerning the *grand purpose* of becoming his followers, trying to make them appreciate how much it involved. He had already disclosed to them the fact and the manner of his death. He knew they would be offended with the prospect. Suddenly he arose to the loftiest ground he ever occupied in his demands upon them. Not only should they accept without scandal this crucifixion of their acknowledged leader, not only must they hold themselves ready to be crucified also in his name, but the Roman gibbet should henceforth become the very symbol of the new faith. "If any man will come after me; let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it." The reference here is to the act of conversion which pledges the believing soul to Christ. He is crucified with him.

2. The next time our Saviour employed this form of expression, he aimed its force at the *full-*

*ness of consecration*, which every true disciple of his was bound to cultivate. He himself held back nothing from his work. He forsook heaven for earth, angels for men, wealth for poverty, the tranquil felicities of his eternal Father's companionship for the restless narrowness of an humble lot, without a place where to lay his homeless head. He allowed himself to become entangled in no associations, involved in no cares, fettered by no occupation, that would hinder his entire absorption in preaching the glad tidings to men. This example of his own consecration he offers as a measure of ours. "If any man come unto me, and hate not (that is, comparatively) his father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." "He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it." Here he intends to exhibit the extensiveness of our surrender to him. He gave his *life* for us: he claims the life he has bought at such a price.

3. The third occasion upon which our Lord employed this almost proverbial form of expression, was when he was predicting the *alarm* which many would feel at the downfall of Jerusalem. He advised all who were in Judea to flee to the mountains; to remember Lot's wife, and look not back on the doomed city; to follow his guidance and trust to him implicitly for deliverance. "Whosoever shall seek to save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." Here he means to counsel fidelity, and forbid fear, under all perilous and extreme forms of trial. He says: Give your life to me; it is more precious in my sight than in your own. I will keep it; you can not. If you attempt to manage your protection, you will be more imperiled than ever. Do your duty and leave the rest to me. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

III. What, then, is the instruction our Saviour desires, in all this, to give? Simply this: From the beginning to the end of our earthly round of existence and service, there is only one rule of unvarying decision—*life for life*. If one wants the new

life by conversion, he must give life for life. If one asks for the measure of consecration, the answer is—life for life. If one feels frightened at peril, he must surrender his life to save his life. If one inquires for an unfailing principle of success in usefulness, here it is furnished by the Lord of glory—life for life. Hence we now reach the applications of the truth we have learned to our work as Sunday-school teachers.

1. Here is a picture of true Christian manhood. "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The motto of all real living to Christ is: "I die daily." "For thy sake we are killed all the day long." Just as a corn of wheat must perish to be fruitful, so every believer must put all the surroundings of his earthly existence into his surrender to the Redeemer. "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die."

We are to "mortify our members." That does not mean humiliate them, or shame them, but kill them, make them dead. "If ye live after the flesh.

ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Hence, this is the question to start with: Are you, who teach others, yourself dead to the world?

2. Here is a corrective of all sentimentalism in piety. This continuous martyrdom is not an accident or an infliction, but a necessity, understood from the beginning. Hence all lachrymose, lackadaisical bewailing of one's lot is mere meanness and folly. A mock-heroic feeling is all out of place. And these multiplied forms of devoteeism, by which one tortures himself into maceration, are not to be mistaken for real devotion.

A monk in his cell is no nearer communion with his God, for all that he is mechanically separate from communion with any one else. "*Jesuita; non Jesus ita.*" A nun is no more a bride of heaven for refusing to be a bride on earth when she has the opportunity. The promise of a white robe by and by is none the surer for her taking the white veil now. These may seem to a few silly enthusiasts exceedingly sweet instances of unwonted sanctity; but they are profitless excruciations after all. Burning a corn of wheat destroys it, to be sure, just as



much as its falling into the ground does; but the one is followed by a harvest of much fruit, the other abides, as it began, alone. It is not necessary for one immediately at conversion to look around for an instrument of suicide. Dying to the world is not always dying out of it. God may want him to live a while yet.

3. Here is disclosed the spirit underlying all true Christian fidelity. It is a will bent to meet God's will. We are to consent to die or live. We only long to apprehend that for which we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus.

The ancient seal inscription offers a very acceptable figure of this. An ox was represented as standing between an altar and a plow. The husbandman, on the one side, was presenting the yoke; the priest, on the other, was only half-concealing the knife. There the patient beast remained waiting for the final signal. And the legend underneath was written: "Ready for either." God calls only for our life to be surrendered to him; he will take it or will spare it. We look at the fire and the furrow, and yet make no choice. The inspired description of a believer is simply this, a "*living sacrifice.*"



4. Here is an explanation of repeated failures in religious effort. No seed has fallen into the ground and *died*. Some of you are discouraged over your classes. The children are not converted. They try your patience bitterly. You see no life springing up from the soil around you. Did you put any *life* in?

Take one verse of truth next Sabbath with you into the school; one that once helped you, taught you, comforted you; one of the texts that have been specially blessed to your own soul in days gone by. Give that to your children. Put your entire self into the use you make of it. Put your *intelligence* into it; study the meaning it bears. Put your *self-denial* into it; for once give over all listlessness and repining. Put your *faith* in it; believe God is going to prosper it. Put your *prayer* in it; let your lips be yet warm with the supplication you have lifted. Put your *zeal* in it; let the ardor of your intensest longing glow on your cheek, and fairly flash from your eye. Put your *experience* in it; try to remember how you felt when those dear words came to you from Jesus. Put your *hope* in it; go next day with the expectation you will be needed by a soul under

conviction. In a word, put your *life* in it; your life which rests in the Gospel; center its force and fervor in the one wistful, yearning desire for that pupil's conversion. And God will give it to you! He will give you *life for life*.

5. Here is a counsel concerning duty which involves danger. "Hereby perceive we Christ's love, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." In the early hour of his first espousal to God, the believer gives himself entirely away, with all the sacredness of devotion of a bride to her husband; for richer or for poorer, in bloom or in wasting, for better or for worse, in life or in death. Feeble-minded sympathy once implored the brave-hearted Paul to keep out of peril. Remember his courageous answer: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus!" How little of the apostolic zeal there is in our willingness to undergo risk in saving souls! We are afraid to wear out early. Think of Whitefield's noble words: "I am immortal till my work is done!" What is life, what is health, what is ease? Souls are perishing

for whom Christ died! An epidemic in a suspicious neighborhood drives us home in miserable cowardice and alarm, while for wealth men are tempting the winds of India and the miasmas of the tropics! And what even if we perish? That was what we bargained for in the outset. The recluses of an old Franciscan convent were summoned to go forth to minister to the sick and dying, once when the plague was raging in the city. They were allotted one by one to the duty, and went without hesitation or reserve to their solemn task. When each day was done, the man returned to an out-house within the inclosure, and *if he could*, rang a bell to show he was alive. If that tolling monitor were silent at sun-down, then another monk was dispatched for his relief if possible, at any rate to continue the work. They knew that their comrade had fallen. When the pestilence was finally stayed, it was found that twenty-four unshrinking men had paid the penalty of their devotion. But think of it, how many lives of men had these lives saved? In the measure of life for life, an unerring Eye struck the balance.

6. Here is a lesson as to the ease of all useful

ness. It is sin only in this world which is difficult. Once bring a man into communion with the Saviour, and he swings as naturally into doing good as a star into its orbit.

You remember the motto on the pedestal of the Eddystone lighthouse—"To give light and save life." So out on the rugged shores of time each child of God is set. The waves are around him, the eternal ocean breaks at his feet. Storms are wild and midnights are gloomy. Yet, untremulous and undimmed, gleams that lantern on the rock, to give light that shall save life. There is nothing strange or strained in this. Poor mariners are drifting here and there far out to sea. They discern the faithful glimmer, and are piloted in. Now it costs the lantern nothing more to do this than it does to live. For the very oil it consumes radiates the rays; the beams the keeper trims it by are those that save the sailors. It does its duty when it is true to itself. And that soul which grace has lighted, saves life when it keeps its life true. "He doth much," says old Thomas à Kempis, "who *liveth well*."



## VI.

### Manifesting Truth.

*"By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."—2 Cor. iv. 2.*

**P**AUL, the apostle, was one of the greatest preachers that ever lived. A burning eloquence, that studied no rules of rhetoric and recognized no laws of logic, yet followed the rules unconsciously and obeyed the laws without mistake, poured forth from his lips, until proud officers of the government bowed their heads in conviction, while the common people, half-crazed by a voice so supernatural in its utterance, brought forth garlands and oxen for sacrifice, exclaiming: "The gods be come down to us in the likeness of men!"

In our text we have this famous preacher writing about preaching. He is at once explaining and exemplifying his power as an expert in the profession. Surely it is worth our while to listen to him.

And the special fitness of this theme to Sunday-school teachers lies in the admitted fact that they are all lay-preachers, with small fixed congregations under their pastoral care. Ministers are only teachers with larger classes.

You will find in the verse chosen for introduction to this sermon these three points, around which all that needs to be said can easily be grouped—the nature of a teacher's work; the direction of his effort; and the limit of his responsibility.

I. The nature of the teacher's work. He is to *manifest the truth*. Here are specified both his theme and his duty.

1. His theme is "the truth." A general form of expression this, to be sure; you will understand its meaning better if we draw out the particulars included, one by one.

He is to present the Bible as the *revelation* of truth. We are not left, as were some to whom Paul preached, to grope after God, if haply we may find him. The Word has been put in our hands. And this is all any Christian needs, no matter what may be the exigency. When Christ would foil the devil in the hour of temptation, he quoted Deuter-

onomy. When Peter, on the day of Pentecost, would convert the multitude, he expounded one of the Psalms. When Philip would lead the eunuch to the cross, he read him a chapter from Isaiah. And when Apollos was turning thousands of souls from error and sin, the secret of his success was disclosed in one fact: he was "mighty in the Scriptures."

He is to present the Gospel as the *system* of truth. In giving us a New Testament, God told us what use to make of the Old. The history of the patriarchs, the songs of the Psalmist, the enactments of the law-giver, the proverbs of the wise king, the sublime predictions of the prophets, are all of wonderful interest. They stand like the guide-boards on Hebrew highways, each with an index-finger pointing toward a City of Refuge. The one thing above all others in the Bible is the plan of redemption. The children in our classes are under the curse of God's broken law. The great primal sin lies crushingly upon them. They are not sweet, innocent little creatures. What they want is the Gospel. You can not convert one of them with the story of Ahab, or of the Shunamite's child.



These are useful to them only as leading them into the further study of truth. A true teacher will never consider his duty done till he has told them the story of the cross.

He is to present Jesus Christ as the *embodiment* of truth. In that awful hour of indecision, Pilate put the question: "What is truth?" It had already been answered by the Saviour who stood before him: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The characteristic of our Christian faith is the presence in it of a personal Redeemer. This is what gives those four narratives of the Evangelists such power. There every child may read the story of a Man, divine and human, who lived and died for sinners. He sees that peerless Life, wandering homelessly over the hills of history, retiring to the mountains, walking on the lake, preaching to the multitudes, doing good wherever he moves. He becomes acquainted with Jesus. And as he recognizes him yet more and more frequently, he learns to love him. That Life grows dearer as it draws nearer, until it becomes the one image he looks for in the Scriptures. He grows like it, as he sees it the more clearly. And the true way to lead our pupils to the



foot of the cross is just this: Show them more and more of Jesus Christ.

Here, then, is the teacher's and the preacher's theme. He is really to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. The Bible is to him like the inclosure within the outer curtains around the Tabernacle; it is all solemn, precious, and sacred. The Gospel is to him like the many-covered structure that invested the altar and the candlestick, within the consecrated pale. But as the chief glory of all these was found in the Shechinah on the inner mercy-seat, whose white light was what gave the entire edifice its grandeur and worth, so to him the presence of the living Jesus in the Gospel is what gives the word its power.

2. His duty is to "manifest" the truth: that is, make the truth manifest. This also needs to be analyzed.

He is to *explain* the truth until his pupils *understand* it. Not that he is to lift the vail from every mystery, or even reconcile every doctrine with human reason. But he must show what God has really said, until even the youngest and the weakest can comprehend the meaning of the verses. It

causes people wonder sometimes to find a man like Simon Peter converted so expeditiously. The explanation is found in the fact of his intelligence. The ancient Jews taught their children in the Scriptures. Each Christian instructor is bound to study himself the truth he attempts to impart.

He is to *confirm* the truth until his pupils *believe* it. Here, however, his office extends no farther than merely to exhibit the proofs God has given. He is not so much set to prop a building likely to fall, as to make evident the fact that it needs no props, and is not going to fall. "Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following."

He is to *apply* the truth until his pupils *feel* it. Here is the great duty of every instructor of children; most neglected, yet most indispensable. Every human heart has its peculiar ailment. It needs a specific medicine for cure. This it neither can find for itself, nor will it take what is offered by another. A perverse will rejects every approach. Despite all that is said, a living Gospel is not a comfortable thing to teach or to preach, because it

is so uncomfortable a thing to receive. It is like the coal on Isaiah's lips, borne with because needful, but dreaded because on fire. Yet there is no alternative. Children must be made to feel the truth as addressed to their own necessities for salvation. God has not rebuked sin in this world, but sins. He is offended not by an abstraction, but by what somebody has done.

Here, then, is the entire duty of the teacher. It is the very heart of the Gospel laid upon the heart of the pupils. He takes the Bible, turns to the Gospel, and finds Christ. He informs the children's minds, convinces their judgments, then urges his direct way to their consciences. By manifestation of the truth he commends himself to every child's conscience in the sight of God.

II. The direction of the teacher's effort comes next in order. And it is well to observe, just here, the choice phraseology of the apostle. He says, "commending ourselves to every man's conscience;" not denouncing him, or attacking him rudely, but drawing him on gently, with all kindness. Old Doctor Miller was wont to say to his students "The first element of grace in the pulpit is *civility*."

And if this is true of men, how much more of children! There is nothing so much in the way of any teacher's success as sharpness or impatience. It only provokes ill-temper, and hinders the truth. When a child's prejudice is awakened, he is lost for the time being. At the taking of Mansoul in the Holy War, my lord Prejudice fell and broke his leg. "I wish," says the quaint Bunyan, "my lord had broken his neck."

1. The *faculty aimed at* in all our manifestation of truth is conscience. The direction of every intelligent effort is toward that. It is not entertainment of the children for which we come together, but the salvation of their souls. And no hour of labor is worth recording which does not, in some form, reach the inevitable question of sin and salvation. This is right, and that is wrong; do this, and reject that—that is the lesson for fifty-two Sabbaths in every year.

2. The *avenues of approach*, however, to this faculty are manifold. Hence the inexhaustible variety in address. Those mostly in use are these three: the imagination, the reason, and the sensibilities.

The imagination loves a *picture*. And when all its vigor is invoked, the skillful teacher will find it easy to turn in the power of the truth he has illustrated upon the conscience, for the will is off its guard.

Nathan wrought David to a great pitch of excitement with the mere story of a poor man's ewe-lamb. Just in the moment of his intensest feeling, around came that long finger pointing at him, with the words: "Thou art the man!" Our Lord told Simon of a very interesting business transaction, and asked his opinion about it. The eager Pharisee answered with much enthusiasm. And then in an instant he found he had been judging his own case, and was convicted of sin before his own conscience.

The reason looks for *argument*. Just underneath the most violent opposition, oftentimes, there is a secret misgiving of the human heart in favor of the truth. The conscience hears the strokes of argument on the gates of the citadel, and makes energetic response with signs of surrender.

Paul, before Felix, reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. He hurried that agitated and guilty ruler on, in a chariot of burning

logic, over the bounds of time, and far into the vista of eternity; then the frightened debauchee could not help trembling. His conscience made him feel.

The sensibilities expect fervency of *appeal*. At the present day, listlessness is by far the greatest hindrance either teachers or preachers have to meet. So we all have to resort to every expedient to break up the apathy. When once the affections are touched, the conscience is exposed. This is the meaning of all those outgushings of tenderness found in the midst of the ancient prophecies.

The weeping Jeremiah had a purpose even in his tears. Ezekiel turned his own tenderness to account. These faithful men had but one aim. They argued and pleaded, they presented a picture, they thundered a denunciation, they melted into appeal; anything—anything that would win even one soul back to its allegiance.

III. The limit of the teacher's responsibility is all that now remains to be noticed in the text. "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience *in the sight of God*."

God sees us! There is in this thought a counsel, then there is a caution, then there is a comfort.

1. The counsel is this: *God* sees us. Paul elsewhere develops this statement thus: "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self; for I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord." Here is the standard of every true teacher's fidelity. Lifting himself above all fear or feeling as to human censure or human praise, and passing even beyond his own self-flatteries and self-distrust, he labors as "in the sight of God." The limit of Christian responsibility is not found in the estimate of men.

2. The caution is this: God *sees* us. He does not have to wait and hear our report. Nor does he inquire what others say about us. He has personal cognizance of all we think or do. The petulant temper, the impatient word, the vexed reply, the ignorant exposition, the hasty appeal—he knew it all the time. Our listlessness in the grand work he has intrusted to us is all plain in his sight.

3. The comfort is this: God *sees us*. Think of that touching refrain to one of our little hymns—"Even me!" When we seem to be working so



hard for stupid boys or ungrateful girls; when we feel troubled at heart, yet toil on; when we fail, even though we meant well; when with unappreciated zeal we plod on through the storm or the heat to our distant classes; then, and always, God sees us! I may do little enough, but if I try honestly to serve him, God sees me—"even me."

It is time to end this Sermon. Yet the lessons I want to leave in the minds of us all are in strict accordance with the text. I desire by manifestation of the truth to commend myself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

1. Now you see how solemn is the office of a Sunday-school teacher. It is simply the office of a minister of the Gospel. Who is sufficient for these things? "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea!"

2. You see the need of a teacher's conversion. How can *he* teach the truth to whom it has never been manifested? How can he labor "in the sight of God" to whom God is a consuming fire? Now there is one thing that does not follow from this,



and another thing that does. It does not follow that every unconverted man should cease teaching. It does follow that every one who is teaching should become immediately a converted man.

3. You see how even helps may hinder in the process of instructing classes. Illustrations and arguments and appeals are all needful in "manifestation of the truth." But if one is betrayed into chasing up a figure, or insisting on a debate, or continuing an exhortation, until his work becomes the manifestation of a *manifestation*, he is certainly going to be in his own way.

4. You see how popularity sometimes gets in the path, and blocks up usefulness. It is as easy to entertain children as it is grown people. When any teacher commends himself to the taste of story-loving scholars, it makes no difference how many flock to his form. He will do them no good. Is this teaching them "in the sight of God"?

5. You see what a lesson is here also for the ministry of reconciliation to learn. Alas! alas! poor human weakness!



## VII.

### A Child-like Spirit.

*"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."*—Matthew XVIII. 3.

**T**HERE is in the Scriptures no record of a Sunday-school. Mention is made of a theological seminary. Paul and Silas found at Philippi something very like a maternal association. And there was a union prayer-meeting once held on Mount Tabor. Some of our modern institutions, therefore, are not original in the churches. Here in this chapter I think we find the nearest approach to an account of a teacher's class. The Saviour gives the instruction, the twelve disciples are the learners; but the lesson they study is not presented in a book, but embodied in the person of a little live child.

What if the process should be reversed in our

Sabbath-schools once in a while, and the pupils become the teachers? How would we relish being taught by one of the children? Yet this is precisely what our Lord here proposes for a perpetual exercise. We must become as little children; and therefore children must be our unconscious instructors as to what we are to attain. Highly privileged, then, are those who have their monitors so constantly before them.

In our present examination of this passage, let us first search out the doctrine; then we can easily trace its practical results.

I. The doctrine of the text must not be misconceived. There is one thing it does not teach, and there is another thing it does.

It does not teach the sinlessness of children. Christ says in this very chapter that he came to "save" the "little ones" because they were "lost." No more certainly was Bartimeus the son of Timeus—a blind descendant of a blind father—than are all children the ruined offspring of a ruined race. Tradition, not reliable, tells us that the little boy, whom our Saviour called to him on that occasion, was the one who afterward came to be the martyr Ignatius,

thrown in his old age to the wild beasts at Rome. That is the best which can be said of him; and we do not know that even so much is true. Surely he was not offered as a model child. Our Saviour was the only model child that ever lived. Our text does not teach infant innocence.

It does teach the excellence of a true child-spirit. It presents an ideal before our minds. The temper of a proper child in its father's house is the pattern we are to picture. Not childishness, but childlikeness, is the condition of our entering the kingdom of heaven. And so our question will arise at once, What is this child-spirit? We all have our theories; but subjecting them to a careful, yet not very extensive, analysis, I judge we should agree upon these four characteristics: contentment, obedience, affectionateness, and trust. You are accustomed sometimes, in your talks with your class, to give them the initials of your points of instruction, that they may remember it more easily. Your mnemonic now is found in First Samuel ii. 19.

1. Contentment. The apostle Paul says: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." But he had to *learn* it. With

children this is innate. It comes without discipline, and only deepens with experience.

A child is perfectly content with its *privileges in the home circle*. Ask any member of your class, "Whose little boy are you?" and he will answer: "Father's." "And where do you live?" He will tell you: "At home." Now he thinks you know all about him. There is only one father in the world, and there is no home but that father's house. He desires nothing beyond that for either rest or enjoyment. Disturb him, wound him, frighten him, and his earliest wish is: "Just take me home."

A child is perfectly content with its *restrictions under the home economy*. He expects to be governed. Helpless, he just owns it, and is not humiliated. Ignorant, he just admits it, and is not ashamed. Weak, he just acknowledges it, and says: "Help me, for I can not go alone." There are others in the same family. He fully understands he must give them equal rights. He must adjust his liberties so as not to interfere with theirs. When he fails, he expects to be prompted and warned. The life he lives is a mere embodiment of the prayer: "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

A child is perfectly content with the *sanctions affixed to the home law*. He loves approval, he fears punishment. He accepts the essential righteousness of both. He takes to the rewards best, but he knows when he merits the penalties. I asked my little girl once to choose her own punishment. To my unutterable dismay, she chose the toughest. She passed intuitive judgment on her offense.

2. Obedience is the next characteristic of a true child-spirit. And as here is likely to be our greatest failure, so here needs to be our closest observation.

A child obeys his father *unconsciously*. He is not aware he is doing any thing remarkable. The parental will is law. He receives its mandates as a matter of course. He makes no virtue of necessity. He can not really understand the Hindoo doctrine of merit. He discusses no mysterious principles of family government. His subjection is native. When his father is at home, he expects to mind.

A child obeys his father *specifically*. He plans to do the thing he is set to do. Casabianca stands on the burning deck, because there he was bidden

to stand. It needs a man grown to become skillful enough to consider whether something else might not be substituted in the place of a commandment.

Children do not compound for one sin "they are inclined to," by damning another sin "they have no mind to."

A child obeys his father *unhesitatingly*. A teacher, commenting on one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, asked her pupils around the class: "How is the will of God 'done in heaven'?" One answered: "Cheerfully." Another said: "By all alike." A third added: "All the time." But the youngest little girl in the class, with a keen penetration, replied: "It is done *without asking any questions*."

3. Affectionateness is another characteristic of the true child-spirit. Some time when you are perusing the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, put in the place of the word "charity," in the fourth verse, the word "child," and see how it would read.

The affectionateness of a child is remarkable for the *spontaneousness of its exercise*. Half of our labor in this conventional world is wasted in simply graduating our favors to the ranks of recipients;



watching the effects they produce; wondering what return they will bring. We must propitiate one man's dislike; we must keep down another man's pique. We reckon with much precision how much attention will be needed to ingratiate ourselves with one family, and how much caution will have to be employed to keep us from entanglement with another. Now, a child never calculates. He is thoroughly self-forgetful in his distribution of love. Thus his behavior delights by nothing so much as its naturalness. He is so artless in the surrender of all his powers of entertainment, that he will tell you all his stories at once, and sing you all the songs he knows, with a reckless exhaustion of his capital in a single effort. Thus he makes others happy without thinking of it. He brightens a whole company without planning it beforehand, or remembering it afterward.

The affectionateness of a child is remarkable for the *indiscriminateness of its bestowal*. It believes in the doctrine: "He that would have friends must show himself friendly." It cherishes no respect of persons. Distinctions of wealth, position, even of color and race, a child does not know how to deal



with. How suggestive are the lessons we ought to receive from our own rebukes and mortifications on this point! We try to teach our children choice in playmates; but the moment our backs are turned, off they go with some wretched urchin from the next alley. Then we force them to play the aristocrat; but oh! how mean it sounds, when we happen to hear them through the casement explaining to the sad little girl with the ragged clothes how we have sagely warned them away from her. Neither seems to understand the case much. They asked the good Cecil's daughter what made every body love her, and she answered, with her peculiar kind of logic: "Because I love every body!"

The affectionateness of a child is remarkable for the *persistency of its endurance*. It beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things; it never faileth. Breathe in the ear of a proper child even one word of suspicion, and mark how startled and yet how stubborn will be the assertion in reply. His fidelity is simply incorruptible. Did you never have one of the little girls in your class become uneasy before the time of dismissal? You told

her stories, you asked her questions, then you showed her pictures. Meantime she continued so silent that you flattered yourself on your shrewdness in beguiling her attention; when suddenly looking you full in the face, right in the midst of your most enthusiastic endeavors, she said as calmly and as resolutely as a fate: "I want to go home and see my mother!" That tone carried conviction; you had to let her go.

4. Trust is the remaining characteristic of this true child-spirit. You will find illustrations of this in a child's mode of thinking, method of reasoning, and manner of life.

A child is always *intelligent* in its trust. A lady asked a little daughter of the missionary Judson: "Were you not afraid to journey so far over the ocean?" And the reply was: "Why, no, madam; father prayed for us!" I think Ruskin, the great English critic, must have had a faith like this in his mind, when he penned those exquisite words of his: "The true unity of earthly creatures is their power and their peace; not like the dead and cold peace of undisturbed stones and solitary mountains, but the living peace of trust, and the living power of

support; of *hands that hold each other, and are still*; the quietness of action determined, of spirit unalarmed, of expectation unimpatient; more beautiful than ever, when the rest is one of humility instead of pride, and the trust no more in the resolution we have taken, but in the hand we hold."

A child is always *logical* in its trust. You will mistake seriously if you imagine children continue their confidence blindly. They reason in matters of the heart far more consistently often than maturer people do. The mind of a child is more logical than the mind of a man, in so far as his information reaches; for no swerving influence comes in to prevent the process. A twilight bird goes right on sailing into the shadow, with the momentum it gains from flying in the sunshine. It passes under a dark archway, with the impulse it takes from the lit flight it made toward it. And just so the faith of a child presses on unhesitatingly in the line of its convinced reason, and with all the force that reason has acquired. Do him a kindness, and a boy will believe you always a kind man. Help him once, and he will never hesitate to come to you for help. Learning his father from what he

knows of him, he hurries along with a swift and fearless prediction, inferring with the instincts of a sure intuition what he does not know.

A child is always *tranquil* in its trust. There was once a monarch in Israel's realm, accustomed to put his experience to music, and sing the strains of affection that were too exuberant for prayer. Floating down the ages, he has sent us one Psalm, gentle as a Bethlehem hymn sung at a covenant cradle, yet manly enough in its utterance to become a "song of degrees" on the way to Jerusalem. And this is its burden: "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely, I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother."

II. This seems to be the doctrine of the text; let us now trace a few of its most prominent results. You perceive that the practical force it has for us turns on the fact that it has been made the condition of our salvation. These characteristics of a true child-spirit have been delineated at this length **not** for any purpose of mere interesting inquiry, but because each of them must be received

into our experimented possession as a spiritual grace.

1. Consider its bearing upon our *intellectual processes*. Many a man flatters himself with a sweet consciousness of magnanimity, when he imagines that observers are pointing him out, and saying: There goes one, once a skeptic, who having determined to put all systems to trial, has just now been investigating Christianity: he took up the evidences masterfully, he has given in his adhesion *manfully*, and thus shown his lofty fealty to his convictions! Ah! yes; but our text does not talk of manhood, but of childhood. There is no child-spirit in this proud surrender to argument. A man needs conversion, not conviction alone. The Bible reverses human terms of counsel. We say to a child, Be a man; Christ says to the man, Be a child. Hence he will "enter the kingdom" only when he studies with his faith as well as his intellect.

2. Consider its bearing upon our *formulas of belief*. A child's theology is frequently wiser for human need than a man's. It often comes to pass that when a mature intellect has been worrying itself into most discouraging confusion, it is startled by

the keen penetration and almost oracular deliverance of an infant trust. What is God? Good Gillespie's prayer did the best it could for a definition. "God is a spirit; infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth." Now you know what God is! But you can not make much use of it. Ask a child what God is. You will get for an answer perhaps this—it takes it out of the prayer instead of the catechism: God is our Father who is in heaven. Now, for all practical uses, for all availability to deep experience of need, I soberly affirm, that little as this seems to say, it says more than the other does. Faith can not climb up on the north side of a doctrine in the shade. I believe in formulas for catechetical instruction with all my heart; but I think they ought to be explained more in the very warmth and light of the Scriptures.

3. Consider its bearing upon our *estimates of human greatness*. You remember that the disciples had been disputing concerning superiority, when Jesus gave them this lesson. Possibly Peter plead for preëminence, and instanced the gift of the keys.

Possibly John called attention to his usual place at the table. Possibly Andrew begged to remind them he had led the first convert to Christ. Possibly James insisted on the prerogatives of his age. All this was met by the spectacle of a tranquil little boy, who possibly wondered why he was put into show. A child-spirit is keen enough to find, and generous enough to recognize, good everywhere. It loves all that love its father, all whom its father loves. It discovers no companionship so humble that it can not spend a gleeful hour in the light of it. All the world is in one family till ten years after people are born; on the play-ground, in the school-house, from the nurse's arms, to that dreadful hour when conventionalism steps in and tutors the unconscious democrats into lords and ladies. But half of the human race dies before the fifth year. When the millennium comes, you will find only children a hundred years old. Please look at Zechariah viii. 5.

4. Consider its bearing upon our *tests of grace*. We love to deal with subtle evidences of a change of heart. Here a plain one is proffered. Our text presents the final result, the completed picture, of



conversion: it consists in a child's temper and disposition. Any one ought to know whether he possesses that or not. He can find out. And if not, he is "become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

5. Consider its bearing upon *advice to inquirers*. You ought to have such constantly in your classes. Some of them completely invert the order of relation between belief and duty. Much of the difficulty they profess to find in the Bible is irrelevant in the matter of obligation, and entirely illogical to faith. Any sensible child is aware that its father's relationship by marriage, social connection in the community, or form of daily occupation, has nothing to do with the question of its own obedience to his commands. Told to go and serve him, it never pauses to inquire whether he is a citizen by birth or naturalization, or what amount of political influence he wields in the party, or how much money he owns. Yet this is just what human reason asserts its right to do over and over again. In perfect defiance of logic, inquirers will insist upon searching into the Trinity, before they take up repentance; upon understanding the incarnation, before they will begin faith. They will worry over the decrees,



when we urge holiness; they will dispute about foreordination, when we press the necessity of prayer. Whereas not one of these stands in the way of the other. There is only one condition of salvation, and that is this child-spirit. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;" but the taking of the yoke comes first, then the learning of the doctrine. "Be not children in understanding; howbeit, in malice be ye children; but in understanding be men."

6. Consider its bearing upon our *aims for attainment*. How far away are we as yet from this child-spirit! "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Do you ask how this may be reached? Only one direction is needful. Look at your own children, in your class or in your home. Your lesson is before you. *What you would have your child be to you, that be you yourself to God!* You will not accomplish that alone. You had better ask for help at once.

Quiet, Lord, my froward heart;  
Make me teachable and mild;  
Upright, simple, free from art;  
Make me as a weanèd child;

From distrust and envy free,  
Pleased with all that pleaseth thee!

As a little child relies  
On a care beyond his own,  
Knows he's neither strong nor wise,  
Fears to stir a step alone;  
Let me thus with thee abide,  
As my Father, Guard, and Guide!





## VIII.

### God's Arrows.

*"Thine arrows stick fast in me."*—PSALM XXXVIII. 2.

**H**ERE David seems to have reference to certain afflictive dispensations, under which he was at the time borne down. His explanation of their pertinency and purpose is, that he had been doing wrong, and God was rebuking him. And there was in this discipline no caprice of the Divine displeasure; it was the usual method of drawing back a sinful heart to its allegiance. These troubles of his are called *arrows*; for they pierced him like the shafts of an archer, shot at a fugitive soldier, not to slay him, but to bring him to a stand.

This is the figure. In another Psalm the picture is presented in full. In those days monarchs were wont to lead forth their own armies to battle, and were themselves armed for the fray. And here the

inspired address is direct to the Captain of our salvation: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever! The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine *arrows* are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee."

The general meaning we gather from this is, that the ARROWS of God are the means he uses of every kind to bring his rebellious subjects to terms.

Now we accept the complaint that many Sunday-school teachers make: the children in their classes are not converted; the daily instructions in the Bible do not sink into their hearts: the truth seems to glide over, glance off, and effects no permanent lodgment.

Our reply to it is—you want more *arrows*. Then comes the question—how can we get them? And this sermon is intended to give that question an answer.

I. You may look for *arrows* always in the field of DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

The ancients used to say that, having fashioned the universe, the great Architect sent it adrift on the sea of his eternal purpose, thinking no more of its cargo or its course—as a shipwright finishes a vessel, and, after the perilous launch is over, never is at pains to watch for its voyages. But the Christian idea rebukes and corrects the heathen. God is the pilot as well as the constructor. He holds every second cause and every instrument in positive subordination to his intelligent will. And in the sphere of his religious influences, especially, where now it most concerns us to follow him, as if to insist upon his own sovereignty, and keep every human mind from presumptuous interference, it seems to have been his intention that many of the most bright and shining lights in the militant church should be brought into the kingdom in a strange way. Some special providence arrested them suddenly.

An infidel was sailing upon a river. A storm arose, a water-spout dashed over the boat, the man was drifted out to sea, clinging to the oars. Finally

he was picked up by a vessel, itself swept from its moorings, with broken cable, and in danger of wreck. Thus was Vanderkemp converted.

A minister made an open-air appointment for a preaching service. Some young men and boys undertook to disturb the meeting. One of them, the most nimble and dextrous, broke his ankle in trying to kick a foot-ball in the good man's face. That laid him on his bed, and brought the preacher to see him. Thus Morgan Howell was converted.

President Edwards turned from church one Lord's day, intending to spend the time in sleep and seclusion. He took from the library at random an old book without any name on the back. It proved to be a Bible, and he opened it to find, in 1 Timothy i. 17, the instrument of his conviction.

Now God ordered all these events, as plainly as he ordered the sleepless night of Ahasuerus, or the coming of Aaron from Egypt to meet Moses. He used them for their specific end, precisely as he did the crucifixion wonders for the Italian centurion, the opening of the Philippian prison for the jailer, or the journey to Damascus for Saul. And now, the loss of property, the death of friends, the

thwarting of all ambition ; sickness, defamation, or want—all these are God's *arrows*.

Any incident in a child's life may be used to point a counsel, to fasten a truth, to impress a lesson.

II. You may look for *arrows* in the exercise of CHRISTIAN INGENUITY.

The power exerted in the true conversion of any soul is that of the Holy Spirit, and the instrument is the truth. We have only to bring the truth close to a soul, and then rely on the Holy Spirit. But there is in this process a wide margin left for human tact. Three forms of effort may be mentioned at this point, any one of which you can employ with the members of your classes : personal conversation, religious literature, and the power of a holy life.

1. *Personal conversation* is the manliest way of doing good. Gentleness is the very essence of piety ; tenderness always goes hand in hand with tact. You will be interested in the record made of the lamented Hewitson. "His ministry," says his biographer, "was eminently an earnest one ; it was not the earnestness of the flesh—not vehemence, nor noise, nor physical fervor—but the deep, calm, solemn earnestness of the spirit ; there was no scold-

ing, no impatience, no angry upbraiding; but the tenderest pity; he besought and warned with tears; this was his unanswerable argument."

Now see how beautifully he wrought this disposition out into his conversations. One time he was passing along through the village, and saw a young woman standing at the door with her child in her arms. He stopped to speak with her. In his usual grave but gentle manner, he remarked: "How safe that babe feels when you hold it so! The believer is just as safe in the arms of Jesus." At another time he met a member of his congregation whom he had not yet visited. In response to his kind inquiry, she told him she lived in such a place, "in the room up-stairs." Then he continued: "Ah! well; I hope you invite the Lord Jesus with you; he used to live in an upper room sometimes at Jerusalem, and loved to meet disciples there."

There is no end to the illustration we could offer you here. A wife told her husband she "trembled for" him; the expression fell deeply into his heart. A merchant mentioned to his partner that he had set up a family altar that morning; God blessed that mere word to his good. Lady Huntington



pressed on one of her servants the consideration of eternal things; he appeared to pay no attention, and she saw no reward; but the gardener heard the conversation through a hole in the wall, and became a man of prayer. Payson asked some young men to let him read them a hymn; and his voice left them in penitent tears. Forty years ago, two travelers stopped their horses at a brook for water; as they looked in each other's faces, one spoke to the other concerning the welfare of his soul. They parted strangers, as they met; but the words of love found a lodgment in the heart on which they fell. So Champion became a Christian, a minister, and a missionary. He never knew his benefactor, till in a volume sent him in Africa from this country he saw and recognized James Bayard Taylor. Oh! what a meeting those two had, when next they stood face to face (as you and I sing), "Beyond, beyond the river"!

2. *Religious literature*, likewise, may be used in doing good. It is not always easy for one to overcome a constitutional reluctance in regard to speaking on religious subjects. Nor does every one always know what to say. A relief is found here,

in both branches of the embarrassment, in the use of tracts, treatises, slips cut from periodicals, cards with texts or hymns printed on them, or volumes of larger size loaned for perusal. The power of a Christian press can not be overrated in this reading age. And God has wonderfully increased our facilities in these past years of the Church's history.

A man on the ferry-boat tore a tract in pieces, in sheer spite at the pious zeal that presented it to him. But one fragment clung to his glove; and on it was the awful word—*Eternity*; that word which our English Bibles utter but once, saving it in solemn grandeur to describe what “the High and Holy One inhabiteth;” that arrow of God pierced his conscience and brought him to the foot of the cross.

The mother of Colonel Gardiner put a devotional book in his box when he went from home; that saved his soul. The father of the dissolute Baxter gave him a tract, which was the instrument in his conversion. Then Baxter wrote the “Call to the Unconverted;” this Doddridge read and was convicted of sin. Then Doddridge wrote the “Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul;” this was

what gave Wilberforce his earliest impressions. Then Wilberforce wrote the "Practical View of Christianity;" that was made by the Spirit of God effectual to Legh Richmond's conversion. Then Legh Richmond wrote the "Dairyman's Daughter," the noblest tract in the world, now printed in a hundred tongues!

3. *A holy life*, however, is the most effectual power for doing good. In this case the man himself seems in a Scripture sense to become an *arrow*. "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me."

A reviler went to hear Whitefield preach, and came away penitent. "I meant to break your head," said he, "but by the grace of God you have broken my heart." A poor invalid came home to an ungodly father's house to die; her meek submission, her patient endurance, her joyous hope, subdued his rebellion; and she expired expecting to see him again. A modest tradesman upheld his family devotion, though it tried all the fibers of his courage; a clerk who lodged with him was won by

the spectacle to begin a better life. A wife, on the way home from church, ridiculed the awkwardness of the preacher ; looking up in her husband's face, she discovered his eyes filling with tears : his emotion melted her heart. A peeress of England had a little class of ignorant women, whom she was wont to teach in the Scriptures ; a blacksmith in the neighborhood, a notorious villain, swore he would break up the school, and so one day violently forced his way in. She went faithfully forward in her work, and God touched his hidden sensibilities with the purity of her purpose and the indefatigableness of her zeal, and he became her efficient ally. An infidel came to a pastor to converse anxiously concerning his soul ; "I could always bear sermons," said he ; "I was ball-proof to argument, but I could never endure the Christian life of my wife."

Now, all this may seem very common-place to you ; yet you may rest assured that this is the best means of usefulness you can have with your classes. Efforts at influencing souls, in any other direction than this, are like arrows shot from the long-bow ; their force and their reach will depend upon the

strength of the sinew that strains the string. But truth from a holy life is like an arrow from the cross-bow ; it will penetrate with equal power, whoever sends it flying.

Now we reach the application—where the sermon really begins.

1. You see that God actually desires the conversion of souls. The air is full of *arrows*. The silent heavens, and the mute earth, the storm and the sunshine, every agency in the universe has been impressed into service to bring souls to the cross. The kingdom of providence is subordinate to the kingdom of grace.

2. You see how wide is the field of Christian usefulness. Among all these quivers of *arrows* it does seem as if every soldier might find some shafts which would just fit his bow, and would certainly stick in the mark.

3. You see how unfortunate an inactive teacher is. He has no *arrows*, and his bow is unstrung. Oliver Cromwell found twelve silver statues in Yorkminster cathedral ; suddenly he asked, "Who are those expensive fellows up there?" They told him they were the disciples of Christ. "Ah ! let

them be taken down and melted up," said the old Puritan, "then they, like Christ, will go about doing good!"

4. You see the need of constant study of the entire Bible. That is what all the good *arrows* come from. When the gifted authoress of "English Hearts and Hands" saw that strange man on the banks of the river about to commit suicide, she saved his life and his soul by reading gently within his hearing Psalm xlv. 4. How did she happen to think of it? When the father of little Agnes, out in the winter burial-ground, saw the great, soft snow-flakes falling on her grave, how did he happen to think of Psalm xci. 4? We must be familiar with all God has said.

5. You see the encouragement there is for many who are unlearned. They can be, like Apollos, "mighty in the Scriptures," and God will follow his own truth with force. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

"The gentle heart that thinks with pain  
It scarce can lowliest tasks fulfill;  
And if it dared its life to scan,  
Would ask for pathway low and still;

Often such gentle heart is brought  
To act with power beyond its thought;  
For God, through ways they have not known,  
Will lead his own !”

6. You see what it means, and what to do, if you are ever hit by one of these *arrows* of God. Job was. David was. Paul was. It means that God desires you to come nearer to him, and then he will extract it.

7. You see how terrible a future they must have who dare the *arrows* of God. They tell us that a wounded stag plunges into the deepest thickets, but still the shaft of the hunter clings by its barb ; he seeks rest, but the point rankles ; he lies by the fountain, but finds no peace. Oh ! the picture of a transfixed soul, suffering and restless, wandering around in the world of the lost, without even the blessed privilege of being permitted to die !







## IX.

### Home Heathen.

*"For ye have the poor with you always; and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good."*—MARK XIV. 7.

**T**HE tendency of our times is toward centralization. The means of rapid transportation, and the facilities for quick communication, on the water and on the land, have drawn away business activities from many of the old channels, and more or less gathered them around certain great marts. Our population is setting toward the large cities and towns. Laborers from foreign lands, and rustic mechanics and tradesmen from our own, are caught by the romantic pictures of profit and plenty, and are hurrying into the crowded houses and the noisy streets of the nearest metropolis.

And, on the other hand, with the easy interchange, the families from the town find their summer transit



quickly made into the villages and hamlets; and the customs they bring with them are urging their way into the yielding habits of the more unsophisticated neighborhoods, molding the growing generations to quite other impulses and tastes, ambitions and moralities, than those their fathers taught them to cherish. The country, in return for its best thrift and energy, which it generously pours into the city, receives constantly new themes of thought, new schemes of enterprise, and new theories of life, some of which, to say the least, are of questionable value.

This growing centripetal force in our land we are all able to mark. Some deplore it. All admit it. And now that the reciprocity of interest and influence between the rural and the metropolitan districts is recognized—now that the mutual pressures and impressions are beginning to be felt, each in turn sobers under the thought that it has inevitably to deal for itself with the mightiest question of the age: How shall our centers of powers be rendered as Christian as they are attractive, as harmless as they are potent?

I. It may as well be avowed here as anywhere, for we shall come to it, that this is not, as an object

of appeal, a popular theme. Choose any city, and you will find that the mission Sunday-schools are sustained by only a meager moiety of the evangelical churches. Do you ask why this is so? There are two reasons for it, at least.

1. One of them is the *nearness of the objects of benevolence*. Distance lends enchantment to foreign missions. Patriotism makes some allowance for even the closeness of Western churches and colleges in our own land. But the poor are here under our very eye. Descriptions of degradation and suffering are spiritless, because we meet the destitute constantly and contiguously. We fairly touch them as we pass. Business men ought to know this, and yet it rather injures the cause to tell them of it. Eyes look out upon them as they hurry down town, or pour over the North river and East river, from windows behind which there is what no pen can describe. Immortal souls jostle them on the pavement, crowd them on the street cars, throng them at the ferries, and stare at them from all the corners; a great mass of living, sentient humanity, each individual with his own circle surrounding, purpose urging, and destiny coming.

Here they are ; and the question is, how shall we help them? They are within reach, and even now accessible to any effort, the vicious and the depraved close by the intelligent and the moral, the ignorant almost housed with the educated, the foreign with the home-born. And they are increasing with rapidity unparalleled all the time. But every pastor will bear me witness how difficult it is to move Christian people toward them.

The dramatic power of poverty and vice in a picture is lost in a fact. I have seen men stand suffused and weeping before the painting of a Beggar Boy, who passed a hundred boys begging, on their way to the exhibition, and never thought of tears. Now a hook through a man's back, as he whirls on a lofty post in Hindostan, has a weird horror in it that makes even the purse-strings shudder. But when a man, with the iron in his soul, his heart wrung for his children that starve or that swear, that are naked or are thieves, presents himself, want becomes tame and common-place. It loses romance when we find he lives down by the Ferries, over by the Navy Yard, or across by the Dry Dock.

2. Another reason for the unpopularity of this cause is found in the *inveterate repugnance of the human heart to admit the poor and wretched to brotherhood under any system of things*. Many of our noblest Christians find themselves turning away to work more agreeable than that among the destitute and the vicious; and indeed it does seem unwelcome. These people do grow presuming, sometimes, when you are kind to them. They have so little sympathy that they hardly know how to treat it, and there is much that shocks one's sensibilities in the beginning of the effort. I can go from where I now sit in my study writing, and in half an hour can lead you into houses where neither the air nor the sunshine of heaven ever comes. Scores of families are under almost the same roof, not one of which ever hears a prayer. No Bible is there, no Sabbath there, no Christian instruction there. The whole duty of the day is done happily, when poor squalid existence has been prolonged, by protracted ingenuities of labor and crime, through its hungry hours. Vice is fostered, sin is strengthened in its power over every new generation that grows up in the infamy.

What a school is this for a child! Two of our mission school children sat out on the dark, rickety stairs, the other night, till two o'clock, waiting for their drunken father to go to bed, so that they might creep securely into their corner, from which he had driven them with missiles. Think of that little ten-year old boy and seven-year old girl, in the gang-way six hours in a January night, here in the City of Churches! Human beings live and die in filth, drunkenness, ignorance, and misery, untold and indescribable. And I live, and so do you, within ear-shot of their wailing, and never know who it is that cries!

I ask again, what are we going to do with these home heathen? They are ready to meet the ministrations of the Gospel. They will take anything you will give them kindly, from the loaves and fishes of a little lad, up to the sermon of a disciple. It may seem to you hopeless to labor for them, but you have no right to despair of the truth.

I have knelt to pray by a bedside, when the awful reek of the floor fairly disturbed me at devotion. I have ministered at the burial of the dead when men sat in the same room, with covered heads, curi-

ously wondering what I was trying to do. I have read and prayed and exhorted at the funeral of a child, and then taken the coffin in my own hands and borne it from the room. I have said my hurried words of instruction to one who was dying, amid the vilest clatter from the streets, and the rankest odors from the alleys; and spoken of Jesus and the cross to those who, I had every reason to believe, never had heard his name except in an oath. And then I have fallen back, single-handed, on my faith, and implored a good, merciful Father, who made these creatures, that he would interpose, even in the depth of their ignorance and hardness, for the salvation of a soul that I knew was just crossing the dark river alone. And yet I am not a city missionary, only a pastor, and my experience is not very strange nor unusual.

What will you do for these people? Oh, for the sake of your brother's soul, and for the sake of a great common humanity, answer this question for me! Look at these men, women, and children, one by one. Take every soul up, as you would take jewels up, if you were crown-making. Christ *is* crown-making; are not you? Look at its flaws,

not to censure or reject, but to help and restore. No man is lost utterly, no matter how burned, or how bronzed, or how blackened; no man can be lost, while there is but one fair line across his forehead on which the name of Jesus can be written! Gather him up in your arms like a bruised child. Say in your heart, "O my God! I might be here, but for thy grace!"

Ah me! men and brethren, I call to mind those finest words of great commendation, which Eliphaz gave to the suffering Job; I want to hear such, if by and by I must suffer: "Behold thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands; thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees."

Here are the poor and the vicious, the homeless and the hunted children of misfortune. God is asking us the world over, What shall the strong do for the weak? The earth rocks. Institutions are breaking. Life seems a breath. Fortunes fail. Over all sits God calmly, saying, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain!"

II. The question of doing good among all the miscellaneous masses of every great community, is



embarrassed with three complications. And so every scheme has to move loosely, and have room to yield and distend almost at pleasure. What seems exceedingly plain work requires all the genius of a master to compass even the least success in doing.

1. One of these is *poverty*: mere want of food, want of fire, want of garments, want of everything that helps to make humanity human. It does very little good to pray with a man, or read to him about Bartimeus, or tell him the story of Bethany or Bethlehem, while he is gaunt with famine, or desperate under the cries of his barefooted children. I know a family that, last evening when it began to rain, had no coal to burn, nor food to eat, and did not know a living source of help. If you have nothing but tracts, my impression is that you need not go there to-day. You will have to do something very like giving money, or work, long before that man or any of his family will be ready for baptism.

Now I know this is common-place. I suppose some will hardly listen to me as I talk of dollars and cents in this connection. I cannot reason coolly



with a Christian who rails out against the eternal call for practical help. Let him go and reason with the men themselves. Come, I will invite you. I had a man here in my study the other day. He had been sick a month. He was a furrier by trade. He had four children living. I buried one for him once; that is the way he came to know me. He could live in ordinary times. His sickness, however, had thrown him in arrears. He was not able to rise or stand. He halted twice on the stair-way. I heard him, and opened the door. He came in to tell me his trouble. His furniture was on the sidewalk. He could not remove it from there, without paying his rent—four dollars. He had found another house, but he could not go in without paying in advance two dollars. And he could not move his little store of goods without paying a drayman one dollar more. He was a Roman Catholic.

Ah, now, what a chance for conversion! He had come unsolicited to my study, and I had him fairly. Now, if you had been within reach, how I would have invited you to reason with him! For, you see, I had "Kirwan's Letters" close by; somebody

once gave me a "Key to Heaven;" Cummings has a fine chapter on Antichrist, I remember; what an argument we might have had with him! Oh, it is too serious to be sarcastic about! Christian brother, you know better than this. The first thing to do for that poor fellow was to lend him seven dollars. Lend him? Yes, better than give, under such circumstances, for it saves his self-respect. If he can, he will return it—and you can lend it to the next man; if not, it is only giving, you see, after all—and he hopes to be able yet.

2. Another complication is found in the fact that *very many who are to be reckoned in these mixed multitudes are not vicious*. In one day's visit, you will find, quite likely, a goodly number of old-country people, and many of them are members of Christian churches abroad; yet in this land, finding no spiritual home at first, they have fallen away into neglect of all ordinances and institutions of the Gospel. Business life and laborious toil hurry them through the week, amid the vast throngs and vigorous competitions of this crowded metropolis, and on the Sabbath they clamor for rest and recreation. Families, even from Puritan New England, are found

likewise, who, reared in the circles of strictest and most virtuous associations, come here into closest seclusion. They discover that the social lines are drawn tensely; the rates of pew-rent are, in all acceptable congregations, exceedingly high; and, compared with all their previous village congeniality and neighborliness, the general welcome is cold and uninviting to any further intimacy. For awhile they make a compromise; but little by little they glide away from their former habits and convictions, become worldly like all the rest, and at last they are lost in the obscurity of the throng—lost to usefulness, if not to faith.

Bear in mind these persons may be poor or may not. Quite likely they are. At any rate, they live among the poor. They find their homes on less fashionable streets. They go to the common amusements; they put the music of the Central Park in the place of the Philharmonic Concerts; they seek the cemeteries instead of the sanctuary on the Lord's Day. They mark the hurrying thousands of all classes in the community, and yet feel that they must fight their own battles. So they grow on fighting.

You imagine, perhaps, that conversation will have great benefits to reach in their case. You would like to talk with them. You may be very ingenious, and subtle, and profound; but I warn you they will give you defeat in the argument. They have thought these matters over a great while; and that, too, when every faculty of their minds was quickened and excited under the pressure of scenes of starvation, and sickness, and degradation, that they have experienced or witnessed. Social forms and conventional restrictions have vanished, in their estimation, into thin air, before the great humanity that agitates and sways them. They have their theories, not vaguely defined, as you will discover yours are, but hard, clear, sharply-cut, and thrusting.

Above all, they will worry you with the "*Tu quoque*" argument. It is a favorite with them. You will say, "You ought to do this or that;" they will answer, "And *you*?" They think you are human; they know they are. And they assert most recklessly their equality before God, and freedom from social estimates of every form.

They will quote Scripture at you, and give it

strange turns of sentiment. You rebuke them for breaking the Sabbath; they will point to you a feeble little child, fairly gaunt for air, and tell you they want to have her go to Greenwood alive a few times before they take her there in a coffin. You tell them that decency requires them to cling to the faith of their fathers; and they will reply it is difficult to sing even the Lord's song in Babylon. You complain because they are not seen in the sanctuary; and they will ask you if it is wise for a poor widow to run hopelessly in debt just to put her two mites in the treasury.

Are these people all right? No; not half of them. Are they amiable or proper-tempered? I suspect not. I am afraid you would not be, if you were to argue with them. You must soothe. Ah, I tell you beforehand, you will hear more bold heterodoxy than ever you heard before, if you attempt to argue with many of the mixed multitude. And now I tell you likewise, upon my faith, and with a rebuked and humble heart, you will hear more truth too.

3. The other complication, to which I alluded, is *the entangled condition of all laws concerning the rela-*

*tions of the poor and vicious to the opulent and strong.* Men will complain passionately to you that they cannot be good and honest, if they would; but they ask you to help them. They implore you to interfere between them and what seems a great impending hammer of society that simply beats and beats them down. And it is when talking about this that they grow wildest. They handle things rather loosely. They say "God" in a way that makes you shudder sometimes, and sometimes weep. They believe he is on their side. They think he is their fast friend. If you press them with the fact that they do not serve him, they will either deny it, and turn their appeal away from you to High Heaven, or they will stand at bay suddenly, and retort on you the almost savagely abrupt question, "If *you* never had food nor father, school nor Bible, church nor home, where would you have been better than I am?"

They charge much of their vice on others, and in many cases you will be saddened with the plausibleness of the plea. When a man is drunken and violent, and you shame him and reproach him, and then he tells you in reply that he is weak

there, and he knows it; and then he swears with oaths that make the earth and air almost tremble, how he went forth in the morning with a determined heart to be sober, and a friend, licensed by the laws you live under, and the administrators of which you yourself helped to elect, tempted him with a taunt on the corner, and rung a glass in his ear because he knew the week's wages had just come in; and so, poor fellow, he fell again. And then, when he says it is no use for him to try to be honest and decent, for all the powers that be are leagued against him, and the whole world would be willing to ruin him, body and soul, in the hell of liquor, for the sake of the money he would need to spend getting as drunk as he is now—what are *you* going to say?

Pity the poor rather than shun them. Be considerate. Thoughtlessness kills them by scores. One of Dr. Spencer's parishioners met him hurriedly urging his way down the street one day; his lips were set, and there was something strange in that gray eye: "How are you to-day, Doctor?" he said, pleasantly. He waked as from a dream, and replied soberly. "I am *mad*!" It was a new



word for a mild, true-hearted Christian; but he waited, and with a deep, earnest voice, went on: "I found a widow standing by her goods thrown in the street; she could not pay the month's rent; the landlord turned her out; and one of her children is going to die; and that man is a member of my church! I told her to take her things back again. I am on my way to see him!" I think I should like to have been present at that interview. It would have been worth seeing, that Christian rebuke from the indignant pastor.

My purpose is gained in this appeal, if it only leads my fellow-workers to greater zeal. I do not here propose policies, but I pray you read my text over again: "Ye have the poor with you always; *whensoever ye will*, ye may do them good." I cannot be at rest while the blessed Faith seems backward or apathetic. The "cry of the human" forces itself in upon me.

While I sat here, in my quiet study, the upper room of my home, many months ago—my sermon just completed at the close of a day, folded nicely, laid labeled away, the evening coming on with long, beautiful shadows, tracing weird shapes on the

carpet—suddenly my serene hour of rest was broken in upon by the slow step of an unknown person climbing the stairs. I waited quite a while, the sound nearing the door, as if some one was timid, or hesitated, or lame. Then there fell a heavy burden against the panels. I was startled, and went immediately to ascertain the meaning of the intrusion. There on the landing lay the form of one I had known in far-gone years—a broken, sick, worn inebriate, evidently sober, but exhausted even to fainting. He was in the last stages of a decline. His strength failed on the very threshold of my apartment. I took the poor, thin, light burden up in my hands, and brought him in, and laid him down on my sofa. He panted so painfully for breath, that I was actually frightened. I thought he might die there with me alone. I gave him water, and fanned him with my sermon—surely it never did a better service than that.

By and by he got his breath and his utterance; but spoke painfully, as he did his errand:—

*“I have come up here—very much troubled—I want—you to take me—by the hand—and just lead me—like a little child—to Jesus!”*

Do I need to tell you how I tried my best with that poor fellow that remembered hour? But that is not my point. What I want to say is, that since then I have never been at rest. The great, tried, feeble, dying world keeps driving in through every crevice of my study the wistful request—Will you lead me, like a little child, to Jesus!





## X.

### Drawing Lightning.

*"And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children."—LUKE I. 17.*

**S**CIENCE tells us that the best defense against lightning in a thunder-storm is found, not in defiance of it, but in a silent discharge of it. Go right toward it fearlessly with a pointed platina wire, and we shall learn that it will follow a fixed law of harmless dispersion.

Is there any way by which the power of one of God's curses can be drawn, so as to avert the terrible stroke of divine wrath? Let us see.

This text refers us directly back to the final utterance of the Old Testament. There are four books in the Bible which end with a curse: Malachi, Lamentations, Isaiah, and Ecclesiastes. The Hebrew scribes were always accustomed to repeat the verse just before the last in these cases, so as to

close the reading with something besides a malediction. It is not easy to see how this helps the matter in the present instance; for the preceding prediction seems to have been uttered merely to introduce the warning. And, perhaps, it is just as profitable to believe that the best way to avoid the judgments of God is to guard carefully against deserving them.

After the last seer under the ancient dispensation had spoken the words which the Evangelist quotes, the heavens were closed for four hundred years. Jehovah had not another message to send. His people had offended him. Justice comes almost fiercely forth, and bars the gate of revelation, because children are despised. And not until four centuries of silence had given time for repentance would those bolts be withdrawn. Even then it is a little child who advances to turn the massive key. History wanders sadly in confusion among the captivities and Maccabean usurpations. Only an infant can join the Testaments. Luke is the next man to Malachi. The sternest of all Israel's prophets reappears in the sternest of all heralds to the church. "For all the prophets and the law

prophesied until John; and if ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come."

The wonderful suggestiveness of this passage, however, is found in its theme. A wild threat, four hundred years old, is suddenly removed in a flash of benediction. The curse in Malachi is omitted in Luke—the lightning is drawn. The Gospel fulfills the law when it accepts children. God receives the fathers into favor and communion again when their hearts are turned to their offspring.

This is the doctrine of the text. Hence, I present to you now, as a legitimate subject of consideration, the work of the Sunday-school organization; *it discharges harmlessly the Old Testament maledictions, and it becomes the instrument of fulfilling the benedictions of the New.* It is the world's helper and the church's servant. You will see this with all clearness, if you examine who are the subjects of its effort, and what it proposes to do with them.

I. The subjects of Sunday-school effort are, of course, understood to be the young of our race. Oftentimes these are the least noticed, and the last noticed, of all classes of beings with souls. And

yet there is no truth more settled than that *Civilization*, *Chivalry* and *Christianity* reach their highest culmination in the caring for children.

1. Civilization is traced by marking the progress of history. We may read the records of human life, profoundly probing for the motives of men, analyzing conventional laws, rules, and customs, until at last we venture to say, from a wide induction of particulars, we are beginning to learn the steps of advancement among the nations. And now it has come to be confessed by the wisest philosophers that the clearest evidence of a lofty civilization for any people in any age or clime, is found in the provisions which are made for little children. Savages bind up their infants with afflictive thongs of bark, as the most expeditious disposal to be made of them. Never till a land has leisure, never till a nation has refinement, never till most of the steps upward have been taken in the way toward exalted attainment, does there come even one look of appreciation or sympathy for these "feeble folk" of society more than the merest necessities of existence or the exigencies of convenience require.



He who, with kind heart, and subtle ingenuity of invention, sits down at his desk to illuminate a juvenile volume with an extraordinary frontispiece, or who toils at his bench to construct a mechanical toy for a little child, is in one sense both the product and the type of the truest and the highest civilized humanity.

2. Chivalry has always claimed to have gone somewhat beyond what mere civilization requires. It has presented as the supreme excellence of manhood, that it recognize woman's worth, that it labor to secure the amelioration of woman's lot, that it freely yield to woman's wish every equalization of privilege, and that it have respect to woman's weakness with all indulgence and affection. It will accept no apology for a lack in this generous form of consideration. It rejects with instinctive repugnance and horror all the learning of Socrates, all his wisdom, all his morality; because it discovers that he positively sold his own wife at a price. Chivalry is accustomed to say, Let woman cease to be both a slave and a toy; give her the place she deserves in the social realm; let her become regnant as God has made her regal; then the summit

will be reached, and society will have advanced to its highest meridian.

But when we are ready to accept this as final, and actually begin to honor the sex we deem noblest, suddenly we discover there is that which the honored sex honors in its own behalf. Look up as we ought at woman, and we find woman not looking down upon us, but looking upward still. Crown a mother, and she will put the diadem on the head of her boy, and bid you observe how like a little prince he wears it. Give her a deed of untold wealth, and she will indorse it for her children before she puts it in the safe. She tells you there is something higher than herself. With quicker intuition and profounder wisdom she stands ready to teach you that "the child is father to the man." To respect woman and not respect children is an impossibility. As society becomes vicious, women are professedly adored; but homes are broken, and children are considered nuisances. And if an oracle can ever instruct a devotee at all, then chivalry ought to have certainly learned by this time from the voice of woman herself, that no sentiment of devotion to her can be lofty till it be-

gins to honor and love her children as she honors and loves them.

3. Christianity enters at this point to accept and repeat the lesson. Up to the moment in which a nation becomes evangelized, all reference to the young springs not from interest in them, but only from the interest which the community has in its own well-being. Christianity takes up children in its arms, as Christ did, for childhood's sake. Within a few years, some in this land of Gospel light have come near enough to the Sun of Righteousness to learn that he desires to shine most benignantly upon the little ones, and wants us to do as they do in some eastern lands with infants, hurry them out at birth where the first ray of the day-spring from on high may visit them. When wealth has multiplied and industry has prospered, when science has increased and education become easy, at last the Sunday-school has reached all adequate recognition, and the best minds are laboring in its behalf. Music, literature, and the mechanical arts are under steady tribute. "The hearts of the fathers" are in some measure turned to the children.

And now I am ready to say that herein lies the glory of the American Church; we are foremost in the Sunday-school work. If some great catastrophe of nature were to bury us under, as a second Herculaneum or Pompeii, and the antiquarians of a far-future generation were to unearth our records, found, as they would be, in the market and in the sanctuary, in the dwelling and in the street, in the metropolitan centers and in the rural divergencies, all along and over the country—it would not be the proud structures of our architects, nor the fine paintings of our artists; it would not be the princely mansions of our opulent merchants, the thronged libraries, the crowded marts, the curious museums; it would not be the triumphs of our engineering skill, nor our inventions of ingenious tools, nor even the gatherings of highest learning in our universities and academies; not one nor all of these would be our best evidence of civilization; not one would settle the question of either our advancement in real chivalry or Christianity. Our reputation would have to stand or fall upon the relics which would remain, to show before that enlightened age what we had been doing for children

in this. It is to be hoped that they would fall upon a toy-shop or a depository of juvenile books.

There can really be no denial of the affirmation, that the highest reach of a Christian civilization is presented in a Christmas-tree at an anniversary of a Sunday-school. A most excellent study for any thoughtful man is that tall evergreen, with its non-descript fruit shining upon it, and the Bethlehem carol stirring its branches!

II. Thus much, then, concerning children as the subjects of our labor. Let us now inquire concerning the nature of the work we desire and propose to do in their behalf. This is no less than to *seek out*, to *educate*, and to *redeem* children.

1. To seek them out—it may, possibly, make one smile to speak of seeking out children in neighborhoods like ours, where, in all likelihood, there are more quivers and more arrows in each quiver than anywhere else in the known world. Children positively swarm wherever you go. The cities are crowded; the unhealthiest localities and the unfittest households generally the most so. And the villages likewise are thronged. “Happy is the people that is in such a case.”

But this involves new responsibility. Half these children die before five years of age. Not far from one in seven is buried before it ever sees its anniversary birthday. What a waste, if God sends them only as he sends the great tree-loads of spring-blossoms for the comparatively little fruit! But he does not. He cares for the least of them, though he gives the living multitude to the world with all munificence of profusion. Some he takes home early, and himself teaches. Some he leaves here for you and me to teach. All these need to be interested and attracted. In the verse from Malachi, which the angel quotes only partially in our text, it is intimated that the hearts of the children need to be turned to their fathers also. They must be sought out and brought under the power of the Gospel. They never will be, until Christians become more Christ-like. Brazilian rivers are full of diamonds; what then? The costliest jewels will only drift down the current and be lost in the sands, unless somebody goes to crown-making, and gathers them carefully up.

2. To educate them, then, becomes another part of this work. And I make bold to say that there

is no one agency which is doing more in this direction than the Sunday-school. This will appear if you consider the class of instructors, the lesson they inculcate, the text-book they use, and the spirit by which they are actuated.

*Who are the teachers in our Sunday-schools?* Inquire them out in turn. Any pastor or superintendent can inform you. The best zeal and the truest efficiency of the church at large are there. God has wonderfully quickened the hearts of his people latterly in this respect. The chief impression left by the last mighty revival in our land was concerning the power of individual effort on the part of the lay membership in our Christian congregations.

*What is the lesson they are trying to impart?* You know very well that the questions which pass for study and answer between instructors and pupils in these classes are those that concern the deepest needs and the loftiest aspirations of the human soul. The tremendous problems of sin and salvation are the staple of close converse. If you draw nigh, so as to overhear any recitation, you will listen only to the story of the cross told over and over again.



now by the parable, now by the history, now by the type. What a discipline is this for stimulating and directing thought, with such teachers and such themes! How the intelligence is awakened, how the mind is educated—*educed*, drawn out—into the exercise of its best powers!

*What is the text-book they are accustomed to employ?* The Bible alone. The multitudinous appliances for help have increased wonderfully during the last few years, and yet all of them are only intended to magnify and explain the Word of God. The augmented and oftentimes mysterious influence of a Sunday-school lesson has this simple explanation: it is as if God spoke, not man. The truth which is brought to bear upon the heart and understanding of the children is immediately authenticated and accompanied by a vital force from heaven itself. The arguments for everything just, honest, pure, and of good report, are not drawn from a mere code of morals, or backed by mere considerations of expediency; they are quickened by the unseen energy of inspiration which pervades them.

*What is the spirit by which they are actuated?* Look in for a moment, in imagination, upon a work-

ing and effective Sunday-school. Mark one peculiarity in attitude. The pupil, in the intensity of his interest, has leaned forward from the bench ; and the instructor, in the absorption of his subject, has bent forward from the chair ; and that circle of foreheads almost touch each other. We, who are a little enthusiastic in such matters, call that characteristic posture the "Sunday-school Arch." You never find it except at the seats of the most intelligent and faithful teachers. Remember that they have studied that lesson most carefully, and that their whole hearts are in the duty they are doing. Remember that they have wrestled in earnest prayer, on bended knees, before their Lord that very morning, pleading for all needed assistance. Then bear in mind that their pupils love them, honor them, and now listen with all the inquisitiveness of kindled desire to learn something new and fresh. And the eyes fill sometimes with the suffusion of tender appeal and affectionate exhortation. Ah ! is not this the place in which to educate a soul for God ?

3. To redeem children, however, is the main end. And I put the question with all earnestness to any

thoughtful and candid man : Where will you find a plan which has more hopefulness in it than this ? God converts souls ; our office is to lead them up under the force of the means of grace. And is there not in this Sunday-school Arch a fitting symbol of the Divine promise, the very bow of the ancient covenant, bending over these young immortals, with its benediction of peace ? Keep a child there, in that focus of intense spiritual heat and light, aglow for a term of years. Let him grow up under it. Let that immature form become manlier, and perforce straighten somewhat with tallness ; and that other form that has been bending with eagerness, begin to stoop with age ; and still let the patient process be continued and never relax until the place is changed, and the pupil becomes a teacher, and, beginning with a little group, makes and tends a new arch of his own ; what will be the result of all this pressure of training in the truth ? Go ask church-records what it has been. Read the names of those who come from the Sabbath-classes into communion and membership

My Christian friend, how much are you doing in

this day of Gospel privilege to bring the hearts of fathers back to their children? Do we need another prophet, with his hairy raiment and his leathern girdle, to come forth from the wilderness?





## XI.

### Intelligent Study.

*"Search the Scriptures."*—JOHN V. 39.

**T**HAT vessel is always liable to go awreck whose pilot does not know whether he is steering for a light-house, or a light in a house.

In searching the Scriptures, the earliest point to be settled is this: For what are we to look? And the answer we need is furnished in the declarations of the Bible itself: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the SPIRIT saith unto the churches."

The motto of the mystics was: "The Scriptures mean all that they can be made to mean." The Rabbins said there was not a letter, nor an apex of a letter, which did not contain whole mountains of meaning. And so they made anagrams, and counted the characters, and estimated the lines, and read the language backward. Putting every

thing in, of course they drew out marvels and wonders without limit.

What we want to know is just that, and nothing more, which the Spirit of God intended to say. And so all the counsels on this subject are simplified at once.

I. Search the Scriptures to ascertain the exact words they employ. Inaccuracy in the citation of proof-texts is as needless as it is unfortunate. For an instructor of children, this fault is of prime importance. "Thou which teaches another, teachest thou not thyself?"

1. Be sure you are quoting that *which is in* the Scriptures. The Governor of Tennessee had no right to put in his message the line, "Now is the winter of our discontent," as the utterance of "the prophet." It is not in the Bible that you will find the sentimental figure of Sterne, "The Lord tempereth the wind to the shorn lamb."

2. Be sure you are quoting the passage *as it is in* the Scriptures. No man would ever find in the Bible the absurd jumble he sometimes opens his prayer with: "O Lord! we would put our hand on our mouth, and our mouth in the dust, and cry

out, Unclean, unclean, God be merciful to us, sinners." Children sit with wonderment under a confusion of acts and images so incongruous and impossible. Four texts are spoiled to construct this nonsense. It was the afflicted Job that laid his hand on his mouth. It was the yoke-bearing youth in Lamentations that put his (not Job's) mouth in the dust. It was the leper in Leviticus that was directed to put a covering on his upper lip (not his hand on his mouth), and cry, Unclean. It was the publican (with hands beating his breast, and out of the dust altogether, in the temple) who said, God be merciful to me, a sinner. This is no way to quote God's language, when speaking to him.

II. Search the Scriptures to learn the precise facts they record. Plain, unlettered men are oftentimes the best expositors in the historic part of the Bible. Limited by no set theories or pet creeds, they simply ask what the sacred writer has intended to say. They never spring upon you any deliverances of "Mother Church," nor do they stun you with learned citations from "the Fathers." They claim no "inner light" more than other peo-



ple, nor do they throw themselves back upon peculiar "spiritual insight."

1. Believe what the Bible says. Moses declares that the waters of the Red Sea were divided, standing as a wall on either side; it is all folly, therefore, to seek for some wind, or some tide, to cause a natural reflux, of which the tribes took advantage, and got across. When Christ told Peter to cast in his hook for a fish, that in its mouth he might find silver for tribute, there is no propriety in declaring he only meant to have the disciple go and sell the fish and bring him the money.

2. Reject what the Bible does not say. One of the old commentators read in the sacred history that Abraham in his later years married Keturah. Knowing that the name Keturah meant "sweet odor," and remembering that sweet odors were used as a symbol of spiritual graces, he drew from this intricate combination of fragments of learning a most felicitous thought; namely, that before he died, the father of the faithful became supereminently sanctified. Whereas the simple-minded reader would only understand from the record that the good patriarch took another wife in his old age,

which in many respects is quite a different thing from growth in grace.

3. Be your own judge as to what the Bible does, or does not, say. The volume before us is put freely in our hands. The grand old Protestant sentiment yet holds the minds of the people; every man's conscience is the ultimate tribunal of decision concerning truth. "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Book of God has been called "the god of books." And in nothing does the majesty of its divinity appear so indisputably as in its simplicity and clearness to an enlightened and devout mind. Neander's motto was: "It is the heart that makes the theologian."

III. Search the Scriptures to understand the doctrines they teach. The true rule for exposition is, in a word, this: "Comparing spiritual things with spiritual." We must not cite, and rest upon, isolated verses, but follow the general sense of Scripture, in all our studies of doctrinal truth. This is what the apostle means when he says:

“Let us prophesy according to the *proportion* of faith.”

1. Explain one passage by another. This is the value of marginal references. In the sixteenth Psalm, David says: “My flesh shall rest in hope; for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Now what possible right had our translators to begin those words—Holy One—with a capital letter? We look over in the second chapter of the Acts, and there we find Peter expounding this Psalm as a prediction concerning, not David, but the Messiah. “He spake of the resurrection of Christ.”

2. Limit one passage by another. “Answer not a fool according to his folly,” must meet mid-way with “Answer a fool according to his folly.” “Bear ye one another’s burdens” does not rebuke those who accept “Let every man bear his own burden.” There is always some judicious stand which may be taken in contrasting declarations like these. God is said to repent that he made man; and yet we are told that he is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. We are told that he hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and yet

that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. In the Psalm we are informed that darkness is God's secret place; and in the Epistle to Timothy, that he dwelleth in light. Moses says, in one verse, that Jehovah spake with him face to face; and in another, that no man could see God's face and live. There is no contradiction in these apparent oppositions of statement. A candid study will find a middle ground between them, sensible and safe.

3. Interpret each passage by a common understanding of all. The Word of God never contradicts the evidence of our senses, nor advocates what is impossible, nor outrages the dictates of decency, nor crosses our intuitive moral judgments.

*It never contradicts the evidence of our senses.* "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" All the decrees of a thousand councils of Trent can not make me believe that the bread at Communion is real flesh. It will not do to quote to me—"This is my body." I would sooner acknowledge that that verse reads—"This is *not* my body," than that the bread is not bread. For if it comes to a faith in senses, there they stand four to one. I would rather doubt my seeing the text,

than doubt my seeing, smelling, feeling, and tasting the bread. If I can not know bread and wine, when I eat and drink, how can I know any thing?

*It never advocates what is impossible.* Isaiah never walked barefoot three years, just to show how the Egyptians would have to walk barefoot. Ezekiel never lay thirteen months upon his left side, looking point blank into a cooking-utensil set on edge, as if playing at a siege of Jerusalem. If the principle of ecstasy does not explain these visions, there is a principle somewhere that does.

*It never outrages the dictates of decency.* Voltaire might have spared himself all the labor of ridiculing Hosea for having to marry an adulterous wife; and all the sympathy he wasted on him for having no better success the second trial. God never put his prophets at doing any such wickedness.

*It never crosses our intuitive moral judgments.* Inspiration does not teach that one is to hate his father and mother in order to become a disciple of Christ. Nor is cutting off one's right hand, or plucking out his right eye, a fixed means of grace. Self-mutilation will not keep one out of hell. These passages

are to be explained so as not to contradict our moral sense of right and wrong.

IV. Search the Scriptures to discover the Christ they reveal. This is, indeed, the first meaning of the text as our Lord uttered it. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life. And they are they which testify of me."

1. The *history* is full of Christ. Study will surprise you with the disclosure that it was the same Person, in whose bosom John lay at the Last Supper, who wrestled with Jacob out in the wood beyond Penuel. He who was crucified on Calvary was typed in the lad that his father bound to the pile on Moriah. The foot of the cross was planted on the exact spot where Abraham offered the ram in the place of released Isaac. Think of Joseph's story; what a transcript of Christ's!

2. The *ritual* is full of Christ. Do you remember that beautiful incident in the Holy War, where Prince Immanuel made a feast? After the eating was over, he entertained the town with some curious riddles, made upon King Shaddai, and upon Immanuel his son, and upon his wars and doings with Mansoul. Some of these riddles "Immanuel ex-

pounded unto them, and, oh, how they were lightened! They saw what they never saw before; they could not have thought that such rarities could have been couched in so few and such ordinary words. Yea, they gathered that the things themselves were a kind of portraiture, and that of Immanuel himself. For when they read in the scheme where the riddles were writ, and looked in the face of the Prince, things looked so like one to the other, that Mansoul could not forbear but say, This is the Lamb, this is the Sacrifice, this is the Rock, this is the Door, and this is the Way; with a great many other things more."

3. The *prophecies* are full of Christ. One seer foretold his birth, another his death, and all of them saw his day afar off, and were glad. Never was child so longed for as that infant of Bethlehem, which the world found no room for when he came. On the battlements of Old Testament history there seems ever one anxious face at least, peering into the darkness and waiting for the dawn. The best description of Jesus that Andrew could bring to Simon Peter was this: "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write."



4. The *Gospels* are full of Christ. All the incidents of those four narratives are rightly understood, only when grouped around that strange life they exhibit. You remember the story of the Spanish artist, who painted the Lord's Supper with matchless perfection. He dashed his brush impatiently over the canvas, as he overheard a bystander applauding the wine shining so inimitably well in the goblets. "Is it possible," he exclaimed, "that any one should see that picture, and think of any thing but the face of Jesus?"

5. The *epistles* are full of Christ. Doctrinal truth is the food of the renewed soul. There shine out the exceeding great and precious promises. Yet how few reach the extent of their meaning! I have somewhere read of a silver egg, once prepared for a present to a Saxon queen. Open the silver by a secret spring, and there was discovered a yolk of gold. Find a spring in the gold, and at the touch it likewise flew open, and there was a beautiful bird. Press the wings of the bird, and in its breast was found a crown, jeweled and radiant. And even within the crown, upheld by a spring like the rest, was a ring of diamond, fitted to the finger of

the princess herself. Oh! how many a promise there is within a promise in the Scriptures, the silver around the gold, the gold around the jewels! Yet how few of God's children ever find their way far enough among the springs to discover the crown of his rejoicing, or the ring of his covenant of peace!

It is only by your favor now that I linger to state a few closing reflections.

1. Intelligence is the very *foundation of piety*. Truth gives life. It is no shame not to know; it is only a shame not to learn. To be ignorant is a misfortune; to remain ignorant is a fault.

2. Intelligence is the essential *condition of success*. Truth converts the soul. Inspiration is what gives truth its force. The best teachers are "mighty in the Scriptures." There is their power.

3. Intelligence is the *measure of attainment*. Thessalonica was a large and powerful city; Berea was a little village. The inhabitants of the one place were wealthy and educated; of the other, poor and illiterate. But this is the testimony: "These Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received *the Word* with all readi-

ness, and *searched the Scriptures* daily, whether those things were so."

4. Intelligence is the *answer to prayer*. Truth comes from God. Martin Luther said: "To pray well is to study well." Even the Psalmist needed the help: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy Law!"





## XII.

### Only Believe.

*"Be not afraid; only believe."*—MARK V. 36.

**T**HERE were those who one time asked the Saviour, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" To this he replied, "*This* is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent."

The issue, then, between God and men is narrowed down to this—"only believe." "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." Hence, the true and only answer to an inquiring sinner is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

No man, however, can be an inquirer except under the influence of the Holy Ghost. "No man

can come to Christ except the Father draw him." If he comes asking, that proves that he comes drawn. Hence the folly of those who profess to be waiting for the Spirit in order to believe. They *have* the Spirit; they are *resisting* him, instead of waiting for him, this very moment. And hence the correction, also, of all false views of those who deem it perilous to urge on every soul the duty of immediate and believing surrender to Christ; that is the Spirit's work, it is admitted; but this is the man's duty. *He is under the power of the Spirit from the moment he asks the way.* And we are bound to bid him believe and be saved. If he cannot understand it, we must explain it. This is what I now am attempting to do.

I. Let us inquire, first, the meaning of the Scriptural term.

1. When the Bible speaks of faith, it sometimes means mere belief in facts. This kind of faith is necessary, in a certain sense, to salvation; for he that comes to Jesus must believe that he *is*. The facts of the Saviour's life are to be received in that way. But this is not saving faith at all. For we read that even the devils "believe and tremble."

They know all about the history of the Prince of Salvation.

2. Again, faith sometimes means that conviction of the understanding which results from proofs laid before it, or arguments adduced. This is that which Thomas had, when, being asked to put his hand in the side of his Lord, and his finger in the prints of the nails, he was constrained by the evidence to admit the reality of the resurrection. "Because thou hast seen," said Jesus to him, "thou hast believed." But this is not saving faith; for our Lord immediately added, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

3. And sometimes the Bible means the faith of miracles. This was a peculiar gift, bestowed by Christ upon his immediate followers, in order that they might attest their Divine mission by using Divine power. This is what he intended when he said, "If ye have faith, if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done." Now, whatever was the nature of this peculiar endowment, it is evident enough that there was no grace in it to save the soul; for the Saviour himself declared, "Many will

say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you."

4. Then, lastly, the Bible means saving faith; the true belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, through which we are justified, and by which we live.

II. In the second place, let us inquire concerning the nature of this exercise. The old writers used to say that faith was composed of three elements: a right Apprehension, a cordial Assent, and an unwavering Trust. Let me seek to exhibit these in turn in a very familiar way.

1. To *apprehend* is really a physical act, and means to seize hold of. When applied to mental operation, it signifies to conceive clearly any given object, and hold it before the mind for examination and use. It does not always include a full comprehension; and this is so especially true in reference to matters connected with the plan of salvation, that I shall seek to have it very explicitly understood here in the outset. A drowning man may catch a rope that hangs near him, and be rescued



by it, without knowing who threw it to him, or who will draw it in, or what vessel it trails from. He apprehends it, but he does not comprehend it. He sees it, but he does not see all with which it is connected. The fleeing Hebrew might not know who erected the guide-posts on the way to the cities of refuge, or how they were instrumental in saving him from the avenger of blood when he was within the walls. But he would need to see the great letters of the word "Refuge" that was printed on them, and note the direction in which the index finger pointed.

Now, a careless confounding of these terms has caused a great many mistakes on the part of those who declare they "will not believe what they cannot understand." They are not required to believe what they cannot *apprehend*; but they do believe, over and over again, even in the common matters of life, what they cannot *comprehend*. The growing of the grass, the circulation of the blood, are as complete mysteries to human understanding as the doctrine of the Trinity or the Incarnation. I must not turn away from coming to the Saviour, because I cannot see *how* God could be manifest in the flesh.

Enough is it for me, that the Scriptures reveal the mysterious fact that he has been.

And here you see, therefore, how much any sinner can claim before he yields, and how little. Naaman might not know, and really had no need to know—no right to claim to know—how the river Jordan could cure leprosy, or what virtue there would be in seven bathings, or what authority Elisha had to send him there. But he needed to know clearly the prophet's directions, so as not to mistake the name of the stream, or what he was to do when he reached it, or forget the number of times he was to wash to be clean. And this he had a fair right to know before the crime of disobedience was urged upon him. Now, this is the precise limit of knowledge which the sinner may claim to have, before his obligation to believe begins. He may ask just as much information as the Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent in the wilderness might ask: Where is that image of brass? what must I do when I approach it? I am ready to go. When Moses had replied, It is close by you in the midst of the camp; you are only to look and to live; then his solemn duty began, and he was responsible for his own delay.

With the philosophy of the cure he had nothing to do.

The two essential things for every man to apprehend, are *his own need*, and *Jesus Christ's fitness* to supply it. There is the inward look, and then there is the outward look. I cannot help myself, and the Saviour can help me, are the two thoughts that must lie buried deep in his soul. It matters little how these things are learned. "There are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit." The Holy Ghost may teach one person through the reading of the word; another person through some stroke of Providence, or by the ministry of reconciliation. In one way or another the soul must come to see its ruin and its Redeemer; to feel its helplessness and know its Helper. It may not see how it came to be so desperately ruined, nor how Jesus can be of such paramount relief to it. It may know no more than blind Bartimeus did; that he could not see, and that the Nazarene Healer was passing by. Those two things, however, every sinner needs to perceive.

2. Then comes the second element of faith, already mentioned—namely, *assent*. This is a step

in advance of the other. A simple illustration will make plain what is meant by it. An invalid is sometimes very unwilling to admit his danger, even when he has nothing to oppose to the reasoning of one who proves it. He feels his weakness, but he resorts to a thousand subterfuges to avoid yielding to the physician. His judgment is convinced, but his will is unbroken. He apprehends his danger, and knows the remedy; but he refuses to be helped. What he needs now is assent; and this requires humility and the renunciation of self-will.

Faith includes this. It calls for a cheerful submission to God's requirements, the moment we apprehend them, no matter how humiliating the assertion of our ill-desert may be. When the Syro-phenician woman came pleading to our Saviour, he gave her faith a most severe testing before he granted her petition. "It is not meet," he said, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Now, did she grow angry at this rebuff? Did she refuse to admit its justice? Did she go away grieved, because he seemed to be harsh to her? No, indeed; she admitted it all. "Truth, Lord," said she, 'yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall

from their master's table." Then he raised her up, saying, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." She not only saw the truth, but assented to it likewise, though the admission was humbling in the extreme. And so must the inquiring sinner give assent to all the teachings of the Gospel, self-abasing as they are; admit every thing; throw up all excuses; leave all refuges of lies; renounce self altogether; "only believe."

3. The third element of saving faith is *trust*. By this I mean reliance on the truth of what God has said he would do; a quiet resting on his promises to accomplish all we need for salvation. You remember in the case of the centurion; our Lord declared he "had not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Now, what was it that made his faith in particular so great, so peculiar in itself, and so superior in the estimation of the Saviour? Simply the presence in it of superabounding trust. He had come for a gift of healing to be bestowed upon his servant lying at home sick. To his request Jesus replied, "I will come and heal him." One would think that now the centurion would doubt a little. Might not the Saviour forget his promise in

the multiplicity of his cares? Might he not delay coming till too late? Even this suspicion made his trust a matter of somewhat difficult exercise; and yet that man was willing to go further. He was content to rest on a mere declaration, without a promise. "Speak the word only," said he, "and my servant shall be healed." He did not care to have the Saviour's presence, if he would only say the man should be whole. Then he could depart to his house restful and satisfied.

This is trust; acquiescence without question, restfulness without wavering; and it is the most essential part of faith, and yet the most difficult to exercise. Almost all in our Christian communities have two of the elements of faith already mentioned. They know the Saviour's history. They understand his Gospel plan. They have been told his ability and his willingness to save them. A first step then, apprehension, has been taken. And so has a second, assent, been taken by very many. They do not doubt one word that God has spoken. They feel their ruin. They are under a constant conviction of sin. They admit everything. Now, what yet do they need? Nothing except this third

step, *trust*; "Only believe." Rely on the Saviour. Rest in him. Hold to his truth in all he says.

III. The use to be made of this analysis, comes next to view. We are ready to speak to any inquiring sinner in our class directly, and this is what to say.

Your experience hitherto has been something like this. You have seen your need; you have admitted it; you have gone in prayer to Jesus confessing it. Told to pray, you did pray. Moved by some faithful sermon, or tract, or conversation, you have gone home to the privacy of your own chamber, making sober resolution to become a Christian at once. You know you have been a sinner, condemned to eternal death. You assented to all that the word of God charges on you. And you longed to be helped. Told to confess, you did confess. Told you must be in earnest, you honestly think you laid your whole heart bare before God. You acknowledged everything, and only plead for pardon. You said in your prayer, "O Lord, I am vile, I come to thee; I plead thy promise that thou wilt not cast me out; I give myself away in an everlasting surrender; I leave my soul at the very



foot of the cross !” And then you rose from your knees, murmuring, “Oh, I am no better ; I feel just the same as before !”

You saw that you had made a failure. Now where was the lack ? Simply in the particular of *trust*. You would not take Jesus at his word. He had said, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” So you plead with him. You came unto him, but you insist that he did cast you out after all.

You said—here I am ; and then you drew back. You said—I give myself to thee ; and then you took yourself away again. You trifled with God. You should have left yourself there, and trusted your soul with him, as you said you would. Let me suggest to you where your disappointment was centered. I think I can tell you what you half-expected, half-bargained, on the spot.

If some clear voice had only spoken to you as you kneeled, saying, “Thy sins be forgiven thee ; go in peace,” how your heart would have leaped for joy. If you could only have seen Paul’s “great light,” that would have confirmed you. Or if even some aged minister had bent over and whispered

in your ear, "You are received, I am sure," then you would perhaps have been satisfied, and begun tremblingly to hope. But because you had nothing of this, not even a sign without, or a strange feeling within, that you could make to answer for a sign, you were discouraged. Now, I have three remarks to make about this action of yours, and its result.

In the first place, let me say, I would not have been the minister to tell you of your acceptance, for all the world. For then you would have believed in me, not in the Saviour. No man has any right to say such a thing to you. I have seen those who in revival times will question and direct for a while, and then say to young persons, "All right, you are converted!" and my blood has run cold. They know nothing about it.

In the second place, let me tell you that you never will have any such sign, without or within, to be your confirmation. If God ever gives anything of the sort, it will only be afterward, for your comfort. "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and this would be sight, not faith. God does not deal with men so. He claims that that they shall trust

him *without* speaking. If you stand off, saying in your heart, I will believe the moment I *feel* accepted, you will never be accepted. You must trust, and ask no favors. Then God will give you what he pleases. And most likely, one day or another, he will give you some token of his love that will aid you ; but he never will, if you bargain for it.

Go again then ; do not wait, nor grieve, nor bargain, nor doubt. Do not reply to me, " Oh, I have done all I can over and over again ; and it is of no use." There is one thing you can do, that you never have done yet. You can *trust* the Saviour. So I say again, and keep saying to you, " Only believe."

In the third place, let me say, that if this sign were given you, it would be the most dangerous thing for you that could be conceived. Because then you would trust the sign, and not the Saviour. Perhaps you have read that story of the woman, told in the " Pastor's Sketches," who saw a beautiful Bird of Paradise on a blue globe, and believed it was the evidence God had sent to show her she was born again. Are you surprised to find that when she was asked for her ground of salvation,

she had to tell all about that ridiculous dream the very first thing? So would you, if you had any such folly in your mind. And by and by you would wake to the consciousness that only Jesus can save your soul, and you had been deceiving yourself all this time.

When you have given yourself to Christ, leave yourself there, and go about your work as a child in his household. When he has undertaken your salvation, rest assured he will accomplish it, without any of your anxiety, or any of your help. There remains enough for you to do, with no concern for this part of the labor.

Let me illustrate this posture of mind as well as I can. A shipmaster was once out for three nights in a storm; close by the harbor, he yet dared not attempt to go in, and the sea was too rough for the pilot to come aboard. Afraid to trust the less experienced sailors, he himself stood firmly at the helm. Human endurance almost gave way before the unwonted strain. Worn with toil, beating about; worn yet more with anxiety for his crew and cargo; he was well nigh relinquishing the wheel, and letting all go a-wreck, when he saw the

little boat coming, with the pilot. At once that hardy sailor sprang on the deck, and with hardly a word took the helm in his hand. The Captain went immediately below, for food and for rest; and especially for comfort to the passengers, who were weary with apprehension. Plainly now his duty was in the cabin; the pilot would care for the ship. Where had his burden gone? The master's heart was as light as a school-boy's; he felt no pressure. The pilot, too, seemed perfectly unconcerned; he had no distress. The great load of anxiety had gone forever; fallen in some way or other between them.

Now turn this figure. We are anxious to save our soul, and are beginning to feel more and more certainly that we cannot save it. Then comes Jesus, and undertakes to save it for us. We see how willing he is; we know how able he is; there we leave it. We *let* him do it. We rest on his promise to do it. We just put that work in his hands to do all alone; and we go about doing something else; self-improvement, comfort to others, doing good of every sort. He feels no burden. What troubled us so, does not trouble him. All we need to do is to hold our confidence firm. What

if that captain should keep running up to see if the pilot was still there ; or to offer to help him ; or to make suggestions ; would it not be folly ? So, for us to keep distressing ourselves about salvation when we have given all that work to Christ, is worse than folly ; it is doubting the Saviour, slighting his love, giving up trust in him just as we begin it.

Onè more illustration will make the whole matter clear. A little child, running up to bid her father good-by in the morning as he goes to business, says, "Bring me a present to-day." "What shall it be, little one?" So he questions. "What will you give?" she returns upon him. "*Anything you ask*," he replies. That proves too much for the young heart to hold alone. She hurries for a faithful help she has: "Mother, what shall I ask him to fetch me to-night; he says *anything*?" "Are you sure of the word, my child?" "Yes, mother, he said he would give me *anything I ask*; I know he means of course anything that is proper for a little girl; and I cannot think what I want the most." "Tell him to bring a Pilgrim's Progress for you."

And before the words are all out, the eager child

is in the hall again. "Father, bring me a Pilgrim's Progress;" but no word of reply. He puts on his coat, and there is a tug at the skirt; "Father, will you do it? a Pilgrim's Progress; will you bring it?" And no answer yet; *and no answer at all.* He is gone. Does the child doubt? No. Why? Because her mother calls her up to say, "You will get that book." "How do you know?" questions the little one.

"For two reasons: *first*, your father never told a lie; and he said he would give you *anything* you asked; *second*, you have asked what most of all he wanted you to have; for I heard him say he wished his little girl would read Pilgrim's Progress through. Never mind that he said no more; he wants to know you trust him and love him."

And when I find, my inquiring friend, that you are disturbed because you have no word nor sign, although you have asked God to forgive you and give you a new heart, I can only say to you, *trust* him for that. I have two reasons also: *He* never told a lie, and *He* surely said, "Ask whatsoever you will;" and you have asked of him the very thing he desired most earnestly to give you.



There, then, is the direction found in a word; yet, oh, how full of meaning it is! “*Be not afraid; only Believe!*” Come to the Saviour; rest on him; hold yourself to him. Say in a prayer:—

“Just as I am; thy love unknown,  
Hath broken every barrier down;  
Now to be *thine*, yea, *thine alone*,  
O Lamb of God, I come!”





### XIII.

## The Teacher Taught.

*"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"—*  
ROMANS II. 21.

**I**N his conversation with Nicodemus our Saviour enunciated the principle to which all Christian usefulness must eventually be referred; namely, that religious instruction, in order to be effective, must grow up out of one's personal experience. A careful exposition of the passage from which our text is taken will show that it offers likewise an illustration of the same rule.

The model Pharisee of primitive times imagined he was reaching the ultimate height of excellence when he could call himself a Jew; he asserted for himself the most edifying orthodoxy; he presented his life as the pattern of flawless morality and eminent devotion; he claimed extraordinary keen-

ness in discrimination, approving only what was excellent; he contemplated himself as sublimely equal to any exigency of public station; he could inform the ignorant, illumine the darkened, give counsel to bewildered adults, and help forward untaught children, being fully conversant with all the ritual and all the creed.

Yet with all these assumptions the apostle seems to have discovered that which led him to rate such a creature as a mere spiritual quack; and he here denounces him with terrible violence. This man, so earnest against thieving, had a touch of dishonesty; so stern in pressing the penalties of the seventh commandment, had some sins which would look ill under scrutiny. In a word, he was instructing others with no word for himself. And, again, with great detail of illustration so as not to be misunderstood, St. Paul reiterates the grand principle of the Gospel: *religious instruction is to be indorsed by the living experience of the instructor.*

This is the theme upon which I venture once more to address my fellow-workers in the Sunday-school. A few general considerations will render the point sufficiently clear.

I. Consider, first, the *great common need* under which humanity lies. It has pleased God to make men instruments of good to each other. Hence the proclamation of the Gospel is necessarily experimental. No converted man has really any thing more to say than this: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul."

There is singular advantage in this method, if only faithfully carried out. It invokes all the power of sympathy. It renders one man influential over many. It saves material. It stimulates exertion. Men are always moved to action in their own behalf when they find others, once confessedly in the same category, now relating and commending the means of their extrication. Naaman was just the person to tell lepers of the prophet in Samaria, who had bidden him go wash in the Jordan. Bartimeus was just the right one to lead blind men to Jesus, who had opened his eyes. Hence it is perfectly natural that we demand of him who teaches us that he should first have felt the truth he proffers, that he should have experienced the good he promises, that he should have obeyed the com-

mand he is urging. We instinctively question the right of any individual to address us upon those grand matters of personal salvation, unless he can say as Christ did, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." He is in as great peril as we are; he is in as much need as we are; and we say, "Physician, heal thyself!"

II. Consider, in the second place, the *aim of all religious instruction*. The conscience must be reached, and through its monitions the entire life must be influenced, or else all teaching is wasted. And conscience is seared more or less in every case where the soul has so far passed from mere infancy as to reach the exercise of free-will. Great ingenuity is required in order to reach it; something more than ingenuity is required in order to arouse it. Even then it is often misunderstood.

Nothing appears so mysterious as the forms of operation which this inner monitor chooses. Sometimes it seems to render a man harder and more violent; and yet at that very wildest moment he is nearer yielding than ever before. Sometimes it melts a man into deep emotion; and yet we painfully discover afterward that this has been mere

ebullition of excited feeling. The main question to be answered with all teachers is this: How may we learn to discriminate in these confusing manifestations?

The answer is much easier than many are inclined to suppose. We can not grow skillful in distinguishing these external shows, without diligent studies of our own internal experience. Conscience must be watched in its working within our hearts. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." But face does not answer to face exactly; features of children differ, and expressions of countenance are flitting and fitful. Still, the number and the name of the lineaments are on every face the same. On general principles, that truth is most effective, which, having proved itself forceful in reaching our own consciences, goes from its success there directly and unhindered upon the intrenchments of another. And let it wear all its awful power undisturbed; when it has the divine doctrine of repentance to utter, it would be folly to change even its raiment of camel's hair, or cover the coarseness of the leathern girdle about its loins.

III. Consider, again, the *variety of forms* employed in Scripture instruction. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." But then, how much there is of it! One becomes bewildered and embarrassed in the midst of such riches. There is room for any amount of skill in discriminating what doctrine or what principle or what precept to apply in each given case to insure most good, and avert all evil.

Now, it is no reproach for me to utter, when I assert that many of our Sunday-school teachers are at a loss here. Are there none, even in this day of light, who turn over the pages of God's word helplessly in search of some reply to an inquiring soul? When the tossed world is drifting, and a passenger lies at the point of death, are there none who hurry boldly to the Bible, as a sailor to the medicine-chest; and yet stand appalled at the formidable array of spiritual drugs, any one of which possibly might be helpful or hurtful, if only they could know which? How can we learn what truth to



employ or what phases of truth to present? There surely can be but one reply to this question.

Let the Scriptures be studied *experimentally*. Let the Christian teacher re-work every principle he offers to others, first into his own mind, and out-work it into his own life. It will not be long before he will have gone over most of the moods and tenses of religious feeling he will meet. It might not be safe that every physician try the effect of his prescriptions upon himself first; but for spiritual cures there is no process that can be more confidently commended. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

IV. Consider, furthermore, *the power of a godly example*. The common law of influence can not be expected to fail, just because the force exerted has in some cases become salutary. The habit of the human heart is inveterate. Men are imitative, and in nothing so much as religious observance. Moreover, they insist upon identifying a moral teacher with what he teaches. Especially under the Gospel will they have it that Christians shall incarnate the truth they urge on others, and shall become the personal embodiment of it with all its

predicted results. They will not suffer a limping man to propose an effective cure for lameness.

Bear in mind that the world has this much of a show of unusual reason in the case of the followers of Christ; he expressly taught that they should be accepted as illustrations and exemplifications of the Gospel. The force of one sentence in the Sermon on the Mount turns upon the insignificant word, "*So.*" "Let your light *so* shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" In like manner, the apostles taught, "Ye are living epistles, known and read of all men."

Hence there can be no inconsistency so utter as an inconsistent Christian teacher presents. There can no failure be more ridiculous in the eyes of a ribald world than that of a man who urges a truth and lives a lie. But, on the other hand, whenever fully possessed of the power of the Gospel, pervaded with its spirit, and radiant with its light, a grand life goes about doing good, that life has a majestic driving force to it almost unlimited. Men bend subdued to an influence which they can not com-

prehend, but which they know is safe, and which they feel they can trust implicitly. Finer picture of human greatness there is not even in the Bible than that of Simon Peter, when the multitudes brought the sick out on couches, that they might lay them where at least his shadow could fall on them. Oh! believe me, this poor world has been deceived cruelly a great many times, but it is yet intelligent enough to recognize its best benefactors. There is no one thing it loves more to abide under than a good man's shadow—the only shadow on this planet that renders it more luminous besides the shadow of the Almighty wing.

V. Consider, in the fifth place, *the law of the Holy Spirit's action*. Truth is propagated not by transmission through mere symbols, but by radiation through conductors in contact.

The lens of a burning-glass will not only suffer the free passage of the sun's rays, but will condense and concentrate them, until the focus they fall upon bursts into flame; meanwhile the lens itself will remain perfectly cool. Wonderful experiments of this sort have been performed with even a lens of ice, which kindled a fire and continued unmelted.

You can find nothing, however, in religious matters to which this phenomenon would answer. The torch, not the burning-glass, is the emblem of spiritual life; it flames while it illumines, and is warmed as it sets on fire. He influences others most who has been nearest in contact with Christ.

Thus the Holy Ghost becomes an indweller. This is the meaning of the word *spirituality*; it signifies the presence of the Divine Spirit. And there surely remains no ignorance in any mind as to the absolute necessity of his presence in order to all Christian usefulness. Without him we can do nothing. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." No religious teacher can give more than he gets, nor communicate more than he possesses. I will not deny that the Holy Ghost sometimes works immediately upon the human heart; what I urge now is merèly that when he acts upon another heart through ours, he does it by entering abidingly into ours. And ordinarily he influences the conscience next to the teacher's, by moving the conscience of the teacher. Thus the efficient impulse is seen to grow up out of experience.

Whichever way we look, then, we reach the same

conclusion. The heart lies behind the hand which proffers religious truth. The practical importance of this principle can not be over-estimated. Let us now search for points of contact which it finds in Sunday-schools.

1. We learn here the proper use to make of the Scriptures. All religious instruction must be received experimentally. Thus the Bible becomes personal in every one of its utterances. How is it now? "The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I can not, for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned." What is this that renders the learned and the unlearned together so at fault? Surely not want of education, but want of experience.

It may be worth knowing, as a geographical fact, that there is no water in the Kidron valley save after a shower; it may be important to learn, as a historic fact, that Capernaum was located at Khan Minyeh; but this is not what is going to save souls.

We need to read the Divine word with a deeper sense of its spiritual meaning. We must transmute facts into principles; we must incarnate doctrine in daily action; we must embody truth in life; we must reduce vague information to vital and available help.

2. We learn to distinguish between gift and grace. Mere intellectual gift sometimes even hinders grace. "Christ," said Legh Richmond, "may be crucified between classics and mathematics." It is not our want of aptitudes for doing good which stands in our way, half so much as it is our want of communion with God. The rule is, "Oh! taste and see that the Lord is good!" Out of this experimental acquaintance with truth grows our power to fitly offer it. Only thus can we learn to recommend the various viands on the table of the Gospel feast. Scholarship becomes a means to an end. It is not the show of splendid attainments, but the hidden force of piety underlying them, which affects the souls we hope to influence.

The Gospel light is much like the solar light; its beauty is not its efficiency. You may divide the sunbeam into seven beautiful colors, and not one

alone nor all together will imprint an image on a daguerreotype plate. Just outside the spectrum, in the dark, there is one entirely invisible ray, called the chemical ray, which does all the work. No man ever saw it, no man ever felt it; and yet this it is which bleaches and blackens a dull surface into figures of loveliness and life. I care not how luminous a man's personal or intellectual qualities may be; if he lacks amid the showy beams that are shining this one which is viewless—this efficient but inconspicuous beam of spiritual experience—all his endeavors will surely prove inoperative for good.

3. We learn here the advantage of seasons of discipline. In all the round of God's dealing with his children, there is nothing like suffering as an educator. It deepens and widens and swells the volume of Christian experience, so that the simplest utterance is made effective. Ah! how fine is the promise for good that is coming, when one wearing habiliments of mourning enters a Sunday-school with the wish for a class to teach! "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."



Anything that loosens the hold of the soul on earthly things, and just shuts it up to God, is valuable; but, as a preparation for usefulness, is priceless. Any man expert in sea-life could have said all that the apostle said when he came forth to quiet the sailors in the midst of a shipwreck. The force of his counsel lay not so much in the prudence of what he suggested, as in the experience which was embodied in it—that “long abstinence” in which he had received his vision. One mysterious but remembered hour there was which gave his speech all its efficiency. “And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar; and lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.” It is just this, *just this*, which is the element of power in any counsel. The angel of experience is sent to one, and then he is ready to say, “I believe God!”

4. We learn the secret of all success, and the ex-

planation of all failure. It would seem at first sight that truth is efficient in itself; that the Gospel sword has an inherent thrust, no matter who wields it; and that all which needs to be done is to merely bring it in contact with human necessity. But now we understand that first it must pass through the teacher's experience before it can be expected to vitally influence those who are taught. He who fails, lacks in experience; he who grows in it, succeeds; that is, he who teaches another teaches also himself.

When the plague was raging in Ireland, the priests gave out that if any man would take from his own fire a piece of burning peat and light his neighbor's fire with it, he would deliver the family from an attack of the disease. The whole region was instantly alive with brands passing to and fro. Oh! if superstition could do this much, ought not zeal to do more? But the kindling was to come from one's own hearthstone then; and the kindling must come from one's own heart now. Calvin's seal-motto was a hand holding a heart on fire, with the legend, "I give thee all, I keep back nothing!" What we need beyond every other earthly need is, to have our entire level of Christian experience

lifted. We are too busy about appliances and instruments and places and theories.

My fellow-workers, suffer me one word. Since we last met I have been at the ends of the earth. This hand that writes to you has plucked olive leaves from the old tree in Gethsemane. I have a piece of a pyramid that I brought away from Egypt. On my table lies a canteen of water which I dipped from the Jordan. Alas! how little use I can make of these now! I showed them to our Sunday-school a few weeks ago, and that is about all I can do with them. And here I am back on the old ground again, facing my task. All I have to really work with, I find, is my experience of the Saviour's love. And that is the result, not of my journey, but of my prayers!

5. We learn the last essential of preparation for teaching. We must have the presence of the Holy Ghost. You see this most evidently in the case of the apostle who penned our text. "Thus," says Chrysostom, "this man, three cubits high, became tall enough to touch the third heavens." They called him Paullus, because he was little. He had a distemper in his sight. His bodily pres-

ence was said to be weak, and his speech contemptible.

But no man ever equaled him in power as a religious teacher. He held up before the world the most unwelcome and despised truth of the new Gospel. He turned it round and round in his hand, as his own soul rose to a full comprehension of its magnitude. He bound to it all his learning; he wreathed around it poetry and philosophy; he warmed it with all his fiery ardor of temperament; until in the supernatural rush of his eloquence his diminutive body was forgotten, his bent form was straightened, his weak eyes were glowing, his hesitant utterance became fluent; and Saul of Tarsus, with all his passions and all his disabilities and all his sins, was lost in the inspiration of Paul, the ambassador of the living God! No wonder that the simple-minded multitude of Lystra thought he was a deity, and brought forth garlands and oxen to sacrifice, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, "The gods be come down to us in the likeness of men!"

Oh! for a baptism of the Spirit on us and on our children, that should fill us with a like experience, and insure for us a like success!



## Division of Labor.

### XIV.

*"One soweth and another reapeth."*—JOHN IV. 37.

**I**N the British Museum there is an ancient lamp, once picked up at Pompeii, which was refitted and refilled, and kept lighted in order to show its original design. Thus what was only a vile fragment of bronze, lying unnoticed amid the ashes and sand of a buried city, is rendered useful again by the mere common-place service of new oil.

A like ingenuity is that on record of the apostle Paul. When he was addressing the intellectual scholars of Athens, he took an old line of poetry which he had discovered among the moral verses of their dramatists, dull and dead already as an utterance of heathen devoteeism—"for we are also his offspring"—and, pouring into it the oil of inspiration, set it burning again for all future time.

Here in our text we have an instance of higher authority still. Our Divine Saviour selected this little proverb as a remnant of the dry wisdom of by-gone ages, and made it vital once more as a medium of instruction by the fresh spiritual life he put in it. What was then only a sententious adage became sacred as an avowed principle of the Gospel.

I. Let us in the beginning trace out the analogies suggested by the figure thus employed: "One soweth and another reapeth." Passing over from nature into grace, it will be well if we carry along with us a clear perception of the point upon which the force of the illustration turns.

1. Sowing and reaping require different *seasons* for their performance. "There is a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted." The furrows are to be prepared and the grain cast in, near the opening of the year. Then the husbandman has to wait awhile. The mystery of growth begins, at once inscrutable and independent. It may be that spring laborers will have new and distant tasks in the autumn. One of the most natural occurrences, as things run, is, that other

laborers will come eventually to reap what these have planted.

2. Sowing and reaping need different *skill* for their performance. Farmers' boys will often vie with one another in generous contention as to whose is the highest prowess, both in the scattering of most grain and in the binding of most sheaves, between any given dawn and sunset. But rarely do the same excellences meet in the same man. The quick step, the free arm, the erect form, the measured motion, which make the sower eminent on the emulous record, are very unlike the rapid and agile grasp, the bending endurance, the strong stride, that insure celerity to the reaper. The sinewy hand which is most expert at throwing the seed may not be the hand which most expeditiously wields the sickle.

3. Sowing and reaping demand a different *spirit* in their performance. Sowing proceeds on a principle of hope and faith; reaping proceeds on a principle of reminiscence, calculation and gratitude. The sower always faces the blank field, and leaves the seed disappearing behind him, with only an unconscious prophecy in his own mind as to the result.



The reaper faces the actual harvest, and cuts his way proudly in among the forests of ripened grain, beating time with his sickle to his song.

4. Sowing and reaping have a different *standard of success* in their performances. The success of sowing is that the seed be sowed well; the success of reaping is that the grain be reaped well. If you will discriminate carefully, you will observe that both of these two forms of activity are to be estimated according to their nature. Neither of them has any right to reckon upon the harvest as a criterion of fidelity. For the harvest depends on growth, the secret of which is beyond any laborer's province. Men are hired to sow and reap, not to concern themselves about the yield. The responsibility of one ends when the corn is fitly in the ground, and of the other when the sheaves are fully in the garner. They who plant only put in the "bare grain;" God giveth it the "body that shall be," as it pleaseth him.

II. Turning this figure now into the line of religious instruction, let us inquire, in the second place, for the doctrine of the proverb.

1. Consider it as a settled fact, that *for every*

*reaping there has been a seed-sowing.* The field is the world; the harvest is one of souls. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the sun." There are spiritual processes, which, like the natural, demand duration, and simply retire within the secrecy of their own economy. Some one must begin them, of course, merely meeting first conditions. After that they need no help, and will suffer no interference. Nothing can hurry them. They must be allowed to run their course. The ministrations which are efficient in their advancement are limited, and cannot avail at all beyond a certain fixed line. Hence it often happens that when any early instrument God has honored in the using has dropped from his hand, the link of association is lost; and before the spiritual harvest arrives the one who sowed the seed is humanly forgotten. Nevertheless, let us remember that never was a soul born again in this world but that somebody prayed for it, somebody labored for it, somebody far back, in the faith of a hopeful husbandman, planted the germ of life, covered it carefully, and perhaps watered it more than once thereafter with tears.

2. Consider it likewise as a settled fact, that *for every seed-sowing there will be a reaping*. The old covenant of nature still abides to keep farmers alive. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." How we do rest in that!

"How awful is the thought of the wonders underground,  
Of the mystic changes wrought in the silent, dark profound!  
How each thing is upward tending, by necessity decreed,  
And the world's support depending on the shooting of a seed!"

Well for us is it that there is a covenant of grace just as settled as this. We need to know that, in due season, we shall reap if we faint not. Otherwise courage fails, and all enterprise ends. So the explicit engagement has been made: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

3. Consider it as another settled fact, that *for every labor there must be a laborer*. God has been pleased to select men, women, and even little children for his fellow-workers under the plan of redemption. He retains just enough of hold upon all the processes of life and grace to show us how deep is the mystery attending the birth of any renewed soul, and how absolutely impotent we are for any endeavor beyond that which is merely extrinsic and conditional.\* We cannot even predict results, much less produce them. A narrow circle of appliances and instruments has been left for our employment. Curious, even as a study, is that kind of limited coöperation which God has permitted. The grain is God's, the germ in the grain is God's, the life in the germ is God's, the growth of the life is God's; but the soil is man's, the plow is man's, dominion over the beasts is man's, and the sickle is man's. Certain actualities of fact, which we term means of grace, are put within our reach for ourselves and others; that is all. Hence every labor calls for a laborer. It will not do for us all to stand back, consulting taste and preference and convenience. We are servants; there is only

one Master. Harvesting is most welcome while weak human nature is what it is; but then seed-sowing must be done. He is the best servant who just puts his hand to what is nearest.

4. Consider it also as a settled fact, that *for every laborer there is a labor*. And the sooner we are all at our appointed work the better. These are no times for any one to stand in the market-place all the day idle. The good tidings are to be preached to the meek. The broken-hearted are to be bound up. Liberty remains to be proclaimed to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are in bonds. The mourning need to be comforted. The old wastes are to be builded up, the desolations of many generations are to be repaired. There is a place, then, for every follower of the Lord Jesus. He himself gave the motto for the church: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In the infinite varieties of labor, surely every one might find his place. The call does not make any discrimination; it says only, "Son, go work to-day, in my vineyard." Every spirit of calculation is excluded and rebuked. "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" The fields are already white to har-

vest. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow ; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." Clouds and winds are God's ; we have nothing to do with them ; the implements we are to use are the plow and sickle.

III. All this is taught under the figure here employed by our Lord. But lest you should think the interpretation has been forced, let us now, in the third place, examine the philosophy of this form of arrangement. Why not let every man have one field, little or large, and do his own sowing, and rejoice in his own harvests ?

Perhaps it is never wise for us to attempt to pronounce upon the primal design of the Almighty in any of his forms of arrangement ; but from an after study of the exquisite adaptations of means to ends, we may often infer proximately what it might have been. At any rate, there are discoverable these singular advantages belonging to the plan now under our eye : it holds before our minds a continuous and splendid illustration of God's sovereignty ; it serves to evoke and educe various gifts, both of intellect and heart ; it makes provision for meeting the extreme diversities found

among the differing classes of men; it most effectually disciplines personal religious experience for its good; and it engenders the new grace of charity in our estimates of others.

1. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to illustrate the divine sovereignty. "I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it: and God doeth it that men should fear before him." The inveterate tendency of human pride is to exalt its own efficiency under every increment of success. And this is even more especially true in those cases when it has a secret conviction that the power it has wielded is not its own. That was the most supercilious steward in Scriptural history, who, having made a great show by lending his lord's money, as if it were his own, now, even when he had lost the stewardship by reason of speculation discovered, made a still greater show in attempting to collect it. In the world around us, it is the agents of rich people who become most violent and most purse-proud. An ill-concealed consciousness of imposture in all their attempts at dignity renders them more maliciously vain. Observe, then,



how carefully the all-wise Master, in this moral field, has ordered it that no laborer, whom he employs, shall forget his place. He is not allowed to remain long enough at one work to begin to usurp control in it. The ownership in any harvest can not vest in the sower, for he never beholds it; nor in the reaper, for he finds it white when he comes. Thus the glory of every thing belongs to God, and God receives it. He makes it "beautiful in his time."

2. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to evoke human gifts. Men are not alike either in ingenuity or perseverance. They need many forms of labor in the development of both the intellect and the heart. Sanguine temperaments best begin great undertakings in the world's history; quiet temperaments best bring them to issue. Men with strong personality start out with every vast enterprise; but men with deep humility come in with the sheaves of success. In each moral purpose the mind of a Christian worker skills itself for effectiveness according to its prevailing gift. Thus each is enabled to stand on a better vantage-ground by entering into the labors of those who preceded

him. Finely illustrated is all this kind of division of labor in the discoveries of science. To find a grand principle of nature is one thing; to apply it is quite another. So the most meritorious achievements have oftentimes to distribute the honors widely. Gioja invented the compass; Columbus followed it over the sea. Franklin linked lightning to electricity; Morse linked electricity to thought. And generally it may be said that all these conspicuous successes have been preceded by a great unreckoned, unhistoric, inconspicuous mass of minor successes, each opening the path toward the final triumph. Thus every man becomes more useful by a concentration of his genius, and God gets the better glory.

3. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to meet the diverse dispositions of men. We must never forget that the grand purpose of the Gospel is the conversion of souls. If this is not gained, there never is any real advance. And so subtle are the intricacies of the human heart that ingenuities of approach to it are in high demand in the churches. Now, it matters nothing how large is the work to be done or how small; different dispo-

sitions require different methods of dealing, and where one fails another may succeed. Take any great work: in the Reformation there were the bold-faced ecclesiastics to need the thunder of Martin Luther's voice, and then there were timid common people to need the quieter accents of Melancthon's. At one time the movement went on more safely by far because Luther was shut up in Wartburg Castle. So the trumpet of John Knox was as helpful as the pen of John Calvin; but neither could have been spared. Take any small work: here is an unsuccessful Sabbath-school teacher toiling almost hopelessly over a rude boy in the class; another person comes, and the spell of resistance is dissolved. The one teacher is no better than the other, only the one is unlike the other. God uses the mere personal characteristics of both at his will.

4. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to discipline religious experience. You will never understand why Elisha sent Naaman to bathe seven times in the Jordan with a view to his cure, unless you take into the account the interior life of the man. Each time previous to the seventh he would be likely to say as he came up from the

stream—still no better, no better. But with every repetition of an act of duty done, not because of anticipated reward, but because it was duty, there would come an unconscious increment of faith. His will would be breaking, his self-confidence would be on the wane, and by the time the final obedience was reached he would be in a state of mind fit to be healed. So of the company which at Joshua's command marched around Jericho only blowing rams' horns for an entire week. With every day's repetition they would think quietly of the duty conscientiously performed, their faith deepening, their anticipation quickening, meanwhile. Now this is really the law of Christian advancement. What God once said to Israel, he now says to each one of us: "I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." The grand purpose of all this life is just to bend that iron and soften that brass. Human will needs to be broken by repeated disappointment before it becomes meet to receive success. It matters little how painfully the discipline is continued, if only at last the heart will be able to say with the heroic Paul: "By the grace of

God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all; *yet not I*, but the grace of God which was with me."

5. "One soweth and another reapeth," in order to teach us charity. To one properly educated in spiritual and moral mechanics, there will always be significance in even the slightest lever and pinion and pin, as well as in the massive wheels within wheels. You will remember the absurd disappointment of the laborers, who jealously demanded more than their penny because the same was given to those who came into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. There must be no envy among the followers of Christ. Fine, high challenge is that which the apostle uttered, when some weak-minded converts were forming parties in Corinth: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." No man is so great in this world as to be greater than any other man,

provided both of them are the servants of God. Samuel swayed rule in Israel, but the day was when the forgotten Hannah made him a little coat every year. The widow of Sarepta, with her barrel of inexhaustible meal, her cruse of unfailing oil, and her loft where he abode, had very much to do with that splendid triumph of Elijah on the summit of Carmel. Andrew had a share in the converts at Pentecost, for he led Simon Peter to Jesus. Do you know who Epenetus was? Did you ever hear of Adronicus and Julia? Yet please go and read the last chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, to see how kindly he spoke of these and others; they were all his "workfellows" and his "kinsmen."

IV. In making practical application of these thoughts, there will be danger of my becoming prolix. The reach they possess is very extensive; they serve to correct many mistakes. But I will delay your minds with the mere mention of only a few lessons.

1. Here you discover the true dignity of *faithfulness*. Success is the world's criterion of merit; fidelity is God's. The reward of being "faithful

over a few things" is just the same as being "faithful over many things; for the emphasis falls upon the same word; it is the "faithful" who will enter into the joy of their Lord.

2. Here you see what it is to be a soldier of the cross. I fall to thinking sometimes in the night of the brave boys that went forth five years ago from many of our Sunday-school classes, and laid themselves down to die in the Wilderness and at Gettysburg. There in their graves they lie, and we are entering into their labors to-day in the peace they conquered. How little heroism for God there is in this world now! Put it to your own soul—how would you like it if you were bidden to go labor for a grand cause, die only in the faith of victory, "but without the sight"?

3. Here you learn how imperatively every one is urged to enter his field of duty. Alas for the force which is simply wasted in trying to find one's work! If he is not good at sowing, let him break up fallow ground; if he cannot plow, let him go and reap. Do something somewhere immediately. If you can not plant heavy theology like Jonathan Edwards, be willing to sow light exhortations like



Harlan Page. If you cannot preach like Whitefield, go read the Bible at a bedside, and then write "The Victory Won."

4. Here you perceive the folly of being disheartened at delay. God sometimes takes natural methods of removing obstacles even when they would appear most dilatory. Daniel once became very much troubled under the impression that his prayer had not been answered. The angel Gabriel was sent to him to say that the petition was heard as usual, and the command had gone forth for its reply, but that the prince of the kingdom of Persia had withstood the Almighty twenty-one days. No man ought to get impatient in three weeks. He can bear as long as God does. Philip the Second used to say, "*Time and I will work wonders.*"

5. Here you discover, on the other hand, how weak is all undue elation at success. Those who went before us labored, and we entered into their labors. The most prosperous ministry is not always the most toilsome, the most self-sacrificing, or the most meritorious. Philip baptized the eunuch in the desert, and that introduced the Gospel into Africa. But the sermon which converted the

eunuch was one preached seven hundred years before Philip was born, by the prophet Isaiah. And Isaiah was so much discouraged that he said no one had believed his report. God not unfrequently sends a man to reap that whereon he bestowed no labor. Sometimes a teacher reports a name with great joy; a new soul has been added to the redeemed. But now, if influences were searched out, it might be found that the prayers of a dead mother or the counsels of a distant father had made the way easy.

6. Here, then, you begin to imagine what surprises there will be at the final ingathering. As the great day draws nearer, events will hurry somewhat. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed." Then we shall know how intimately we have labored together. He that reapeth shall then receive his wages, and gather fruit unto life eternal; "that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." When the unwritten history shall be read, and *not before*, I suppose the names of the heroes and the heroines will appear. "They shall not build and

another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands."





## XV.

### A Bible-Class Lesson.

*'The Transfiguration of our Saviour.')*—LUKE IX. 28-36.

**T**HIS study is unlike those which have preceded it, in that it consists of a report of an actual recitation in the midst of a public convention held in New York City, in the spring of 1867. The audience was densely crowded in the body and galleries of the church. Many clergymen were present, as well as a large number of our most faithful and intelligent Sunday-school workers. It had been expected that a group of young men would be present who might act their part in the exercise of question and answer; but this inadvertently failed. The Institute composed the class. The place of the lesson had been announced the evening before, and the teachers requested to bring their Bibles with them.

The teacher prefaced the lesson by a word of greeting to those who were engaged in the common cause of instructing the young out of the Word of God: He recognized but few of the many hundreds of teachers before him, but hoped that none would hesitate to ask and to answer any questions bearing upon the lesson. If he should call upon personal friends, whom he was glad to greet around him, and they should not be ready with an answer, he hoped that they, at least, would be bold enough to say, "I do not know," with all calmness and equanimity,—which are among the first requisites of good Sunday-school teachers.

The teacher held in his hand a little book entitled "Robinson's Harmony," which he found most convenient for use in referring to the various passages.

*Teacher.* May I ask my good brother P—— to read the 28th verse?

*P——* reads clearly and distinctly, "And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James and went up into a mountain to pray."

*Teacher.* We have this narrative repeated in two

others of the evangelists, Matthew and Mark. Not much addition is made to it in either, and only an occasional word is thrown in by Mark, in his peculiarly graphic style. Will my good brother A—— S—— tell me what “sayings” Luke refers to—“After these sayings?”

S——. The teachings of our Saviour in reference to the true spirit of the Christian life.

*Teacher.* Just before that our Saviour had received a rebuke. Who administered it? Is there a record in the Bible of any man who dared to administer a rebuke to Christ?

S——. Simon Peter.

*Teacher.* Yes. Our Saviour told him that he was to die on the cross. Simon Peter resisted the very thought, and would have had him retreat from the atonement, if he could thereby have saved his life. He received for this the most stinging rebuke that ever man received—“Get thee behind me, Satan!” And it was because our Saviour saw that the disciples were unable to bear that great truth of his suffering that this scene of the transfiguration seems to have been instituted as a part of his history. It was “after these sayings,” that

"it came to pass." How long after, brother W——?

R—— W——. "About an eight days."

*Teacher.* Is any other time mentioned by the other evangelists?

R—— W——. Matthew and Mark call it six days, perhaps including part of the other two, making the eight.

*Teacher.* There are two ways of reconciling the apparent difference. Luke says "about an eight days." Matthew and Mark, "six days." Well, six is "about" eight, and eight is "about" six. That is Matthew Henry's way of disposing of such difficulties. He says, for instance, of the two blind men, "if there were two, there was certainly one." So if eight, there were certainly six days of interval between the events spoken of. A better way is that suggested by brother W——, to suppose that Luke, in giving this account, was rather more particular than the others, and counted as one the day upon which they started, and also the day following the evening which was celebrated by this great appearance of the transfiguration, and joins them together, making up the eight. Perhaps in this



eight days there is an allusion to the seven-fold division of time. Dr. Alexander in his note makes the remark that very possibly it is the common indefinite form of speaking—customary in the French and German language now, and then perhaps in familiar Greek—"about a week," and it may have been that this took place upon what was afterwards the Christian Sabbath.

The narrative tells us that Jesus had companions with him. Will the Rev. Mr. T—— tell us who they were?

*T——.* "Peter and John and James."

*Teacher.* Why these three?

*T——.* They were the three nearest to him, and to whom he wished to communicate the particular doctrine represented in the transfiguration.

*Teacher.* Do you remember any other instances?

*T——.* In the Gethsemane sorrow, and at the raising of Jairus's daughter.

*Teacher.* Yes; Peter the most loving, John the most beloved, and James, next to the most loving the one that loved most, and next to the one beloved the most loved. These three seem to have been chosen as the most intimate companions of

Christ, the chosen three out of the chosen twelve. These Jesus takes with him to the little prayer-meeting which he held on the mountain. For Luke tells us that he went up into the mountain to *pray*. And this is usually brought in to decide a question that seems to be unsettled in some minds. Will the Rev. Mr. H—— tell us whether the transfiguration took place in the night time or in the day time?

*H.* I suppose it was in the night.

*Teacher.* Can any one give a reason for this supposition that it was in the night time?

*P——.* It would make the scene more brilliant and observable.

*Teacher.* That was a possible reason. It would be more conspicuous. Any other?

*A—— S——.* The weariness of the disciples, for we are told that they were "heavy with sleep."

*Teacher.* We have, then, two reasons. A third is suggested, which is found in the 37th verse. They did not come from the mountain till "the next day." Where did the transfiguration take place?

*R——.* On Mount Hermon; they were at that time in that part of the country.

*P*——. On Little Hermon, near Mount Tabor. Mount Hermon was ten thousand feet high, and covered with snow. It does not seem probable that they would go to such a place for such a meeting. Little Hermon, one of the spurs of Mount Tabor, was but a thousand feet high.

*Teacher*. Where does tradition locate it?

*Scholar*. On Mount Tabor.

*Teacher*. Yes. But the tradition only dates back to the fourth century. Before that time nothing had been said of Tabor as the scene of the transfiguration. Afterwards it was fixed as the spot, and tradition carried the opinion down the centuries. Churches were erected on the mount, with a view to commemorating the scene. The lateness of the tradition is an argument against Mount Tabor. What about the distance of Hermon? Where were the disciples during the week? Could they not have traveled fifty miles to the neighborhood of Hermon, which was in northern Galilee, near Cæsarea Philippi?

*W*——. They might have done so, but it seems more probable that they stayed where they were.

*Teacher.* Tradition has confounded the two Hermons. Great Hermon was near Cæsarea Philippi, Little Hermon was near Tabor, at the lower end of the sea of Galilee, and near Tiberias. Another objection to Tabor, besides the tradition, is that its top was occupied by a fortified city, or more probably a fortified Roman rampart, and there would not be room for such a scene. But surely there would be room enough for a modest company like this somewhere on the slope, just for four men to stand: there is no hint that any one else saw the splendor. And then some have argued for Hermon, that the characteristic note thrown in by Mark, that our Saviour's raiment was "white as snow," was suggested by the snow around them, on Hermon's sides. Singularly enough, the best versions omit that comparison. A large number of learned commentators argue on both sides. It may be remarked, that all the arguments in favor of Mount Hermon rest simply as against Mount Tabor. There is no argument positively for Hermon; only conjecture. But it seems to me that the whole thing has been taken out of its relative importance; and it is a curious fact that the dis-

cussions of the traditional location, &c., have often commanded more interest and attention than the fact of the transfiguration itself. We may rest in the confidence that the mountain was accessible, and that it was a good place for the scene which was enacted upon it.

——“And he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening.”

*Teacher.* How forcibly does this suggest to us the lesson that comes out through all our Christian experience, as to the disclosures of Christ obtained in the moment of prayer! I think we may get a greater consciousness of the real force of the story of the transfiguration, if we will accept the little conceit of considering it as a union prayer-meeting—the church on earth meeting the church in heaven, with Christ in the midst of them! We shall find what they talked about by-and-by. Here we have the living and the dead coming together, with only the vail of flesh between them, in the presence of the once crucified but now risen and glorified Christ. Noble testimony to the value and power

of the disclosures made in prayer, to Christ's disciples!

*Teacher.* Will you tell me, Mr. J——, what is meant by the word "fashion," in the text, "The fashion of his countenance was altered?"

*J——.* The "appearance."

*Teacher.* Yes; just that, and that only. Fashion is not appearance now; it is to hide appearance. Humbling recollection it ought ever to be that clothes came into the world with sin. They are evidences of lost innocence; and the less pride we show in them the better. The old English word occurs six times in the Scriptures, and is almost always translated by the word "appearance" or "form." The "form" of his countenance, then, was altered; it appeared otherwise than it usually did. Mark's little word here, "shining exceeding white as snow," and then his comparison, "so as no fuller on earth can white them," is one of the finer illustrations of Mark's peculiar way of describing a scene. He mentions fewer scenes, but more in detail, than the other three evangelists.

"White and glistening." Will the Rev. Mr. W—— tell us what these words mean?

W——. Very bright in appearance.

*Teacher.* Yes; flashing brightness, like the rays or beams of a star, or the glancing of light upon a spear's point. It refers to a radiating light. Where this peculiar light came from, or what it was, has exercised the speculative gifts of great and anxious commentators, but they only darken the light in more senses than one. Whether the light came from within or from without, we do not know. All we know is that it was this peculiar, splendid manifestation of the Saviour in the immediate presence of these three chosen disciples, that filled them with such wonder and awe. Nearer to heaven no men could get than they were permitted to get that night. Nearer to heaven no men can get than when two or three meet together in his name, and he is in the midst. Whilst he was there it seemed that he was not left alone. The disciples discover, the moment they look up, that he has companions. Who else appear?

*Scholar.* Moses and Elias.

*Teacher.* Yes; Moses as the representative of the Law, Elias as the representative of the Prophets—the representatives of the old dispensation meeting



with Peter, James, and John as representatives of the new ; the one likewise representing the dead, the other the living saints.

*Teacher.* To Mr. P——. Was there anything peculiar about Moses' death and burial ?

P——. There seemed to have been a dispute between Satan and Michael concerning his body.

*Teacher.* Yes, and you remember that he went up to Mount Nebo to die, and no record was made of his death, or of the place of his burial, but we are told that the Lord buried his body. Then there is a singular expression of Jude in reference to the Devil and the Archangel contending about his body. Some commentators say that in Moses we have another case of unseen and unrecorded translation, and that his body is now in heaven as Elijah's is, and that in this glorification of the earthly body before death in the case of our Saviour, there were added for illustration and exhibition the two cases of glorified bodies after death.

Mr. W——, I will ask you a question : Did Elijah go up in the whirlwind, or in the chariot of fire ? How did he go up ?

W——. He went up in the whirlwind, in the chariot of fire.

*Teacher.* Well, sir, almost every Sunday-scholar asks that question, and almost every teacher answers that the chariot was there to take him up. Perhaps he went up in the chariot and the chariot in the whirlwind, but it does not say so. The record says that he went up in the whirlwind. A note of caution, merely, to teachers to observe the text strictly and with great care.

But I would like to call your attention particularly to the next verse: "Who appeared in glory and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Why did not Peter ask about that? It was a question that had deeply interested him. He did not get much comfort from the disciples. They did not realize their state at all. All the comfort he could get now must be from Moses and Elias. But they did not satisfy his curiosity. Here was Elijah translated without death, and here was Moses, concerning whom there was at least the same mysterious probability, and the natural subject of conversation, in Peter's view, would be the state of the dead. Surely now his inquiring in-

terest will be rewarded. There was every provocation to these speculative questions. But no! When Moses and Elijah came they had something better to talk about; and we have no record that any of the disciples made any inquiries concerning these mysteries. The simple story of the cross was the all-absorbing theme. "The decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" was the subject of their sweet converse. Mr. S——, will you tell us what is meant by his "decease?"

S——. His death.

*Teacher.* Yes; literally and more fully, his exodus, or exit. Now let us note here more particularly, the meeting together of the old and new dispensations, in this whole exhibition. Here we have Peter suggesting that three tabernacles should be erected. Here was the appearance of the Shechinah, and the presence of the Saviour. Here was the conversation about the Saviour's decease, or literally exodus, and Peter seems to have caught the word from this spot, and afterwards applies it to his own decease (2 Peter 1. 15). And here we have all the old appearances, the pillar of cloud, and the fire, and the presence of God in Christ, so

that when Peter begins to speak, his very first suggestion is that they should build tabernacles as in the exodus of God's ancient people. So that it may well be believed that the whole scene was meant to be a vivid picture to the minds of the gazing disciples of the absolute oneness of the old dispensation with the new.

*R—— W——.* Shall I ask a question? May we learn, and is it a fitting lesson just here, in relation to the conversation of the two heavenly visitants, that the subject most interesting to Christians when they meet, should be Christ, and that this subject should fill and engage them more than anything else?

*Teacher.* Most certainly. It is the one subject of a prayer-meeting; the only one in a union prayer-meeting. It is the one that binds saints on earth and in heaven together. It is the one theme, CHRIST.

How much, Mr. L——, did Moses and Elias understand about "the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem?" How much did the Old Testament saints understand of the New Testament theology?

*L*——. I suppose they recognized the Messiah in the types and shadows which set him forth.

*Teacher.* Somebody saw the day of Christ afar off. Who was it?

*Scholar.* Abraham.

*Teacher.* Yes, and in the promise made to his seed. He saw the day of Christ in the person of his own son Isaac, who was a type of Christ. The foot of the cross was planted, not only on the hill, but on the very spot, where the ram was found caught by the horns in the thicket at the time when Abraham was saved the sacrifice of Isaac. And it may be that the ancient Israelites, in every part of their worship, saw Christ as distinctly as we see him, and understood as much as was necessary for them to understand of the atonement, to be saved. Surely we have it revealed to us that those who are in glory still retain an interest in, and cognizance of, all that transpires in the progress of Christ's kingdom on the earth. The de-  
cease which Christ should accomplish at Jerusalem was the link between the old and the new dispensations. Moses and Elias doubtless knew as much as Peter and James and John did.

*P*——. Did not their knowledge cover his entire work and life on the earth?

*Teacher.* Yes. No doubt they took an interest in the whole plan and work of redemption, in all its progress and accomplishment. Let me call you specially to observe one remarkable illustration afforded in this narrative. Moses was introduced to us as one of the feeblest of human kind—in an ark of bulrushes upon the water—a lost child—a little city mission child, if you have a mind to call it so—a waif, thrown out upon the current of the world with nothing but absolute neglect and ruin before it. Just at this juncture God's providence interferes to rescue him. He lives. Forty years after you find him acting his part in Egypt. Forty years thereafter you find him at the head of the children of Israel. Forty years after that on Mount Nébo, going into that mysterious form of death to which he was led by the Spirit. Then he disappears. Fifteen hundred years pass slowly by, and this same child, and leader, reappears in glory, still speaking, still knowing! How the thought of immortality dawns with new light upon us! There rises before the mind a picture of what immortality

means. We see him as we trace the steps in his wonderful life, and we begin to understand what it means to save a *child*. We reflect upon the years of instruction that have passed over his head since the day he was rescued from the ark of bulrushes, until we now behold him on the mount of glory, and feel that it is the same immortal spirit, going from one degree of knowledge and of glory to another! Is it not well for us, in teaching little children, to imagine oftener than we do, some Tabor-top of transfiguration of that soul, redeemed and coming by and by to meet us, a glorified spirit, a companion of Moses and Elias, and of the once crucified but now risen and exalted Christ, reigning with him for evermore?

*Scholar.* Do you not suppose that Moses and Elias received instruction after they got to heaven, on all that belongs to Christ's kingdom and work?

*Teacher.* I have no doubt they received instruction, agreeing to all the intelligence of heaven. If you mean to ask whether they might have received the entire knowledge of it there, whether it could have been communicated as first information there, and afterwards increased, I have no doubt



of that either. We are told that Moses spoke of Christ. That Moses understood the plan of the atonement, and saw it in the sacrifices, and in all the system he gave to the people, I make no doubt. That Jacob saw Christ when he had the vision at Bethel, I make no doubt. For hereafter, said our Saviour, ye shall see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man—making a fair parallel between the two scenes. The Old Testament saints were made, through visions and dreams, to see the day of Christ afar off. And perhaps it was not a new communication of information to them in heaven, but a constant growing into the intelligence and knowledge of God's plans and the scheme of redemption.

*Scholar.* Do you think that Bishop Whately is correct in saying that the Old Testament saints did not think that the Messiah would be more than a man; that he would not be God?

*Teacher.* I do not know the connection of his remark, nor the point of history of which he is speaking; whether at the period and state of ignorance, or intelligence, which the Jewish nation exhibited. At the time of Christ the state of the

Jewish religion was deplorably low; they held views and customs entirely at variance with the prophecies of their own Scripture. In the days of the glory of the Israelites, I believe that they understood fully what the Messiah would be, and that the remark quoted would not apply.

*Scholar.* The writer is speaking of the accusation made against Christ of using blasphemy in claiming to be God. He says in this place that the Old Testament writers had not had the idea that Messiah was God.

*Teacher.* David certainly had, when in his psalms he called him Lord. And some of the descriptions of Christ in the prophecies leave us in no doubt on that point.

*Scholar.* Do you think that Moses and Elias, when they appeared, had as clear an idea of the death that Christ was to accomplish, as we have now?

*Teacher.* Yes. I think they knew much more than we, and that any man learns in the first hour after death more than in all his life previous, about that and all the points of our religion. Even as the glory of the Old Testament dispensation has

passed away, and is exceeded by this glory that remaineth. Progress is the law in Christ's earthly and heavenly kingdom.

*Scholar.* Is not the truth of recognition of friends in heaven taught in this lesson?

*Teacher.* It is, most plainly. It is one of the most comforting and glorious lessons to be derived from this whole passage. The recognition must have been instinctive almost. It may have been that our Saviour told Peter and James and John who Moses and Elias were; at any rate, they did know them, and none of the masters in speculation can rob the scene of this, its crowning lesson of comfort to believers. [The teacher here animadverted strongly upon Raphael's inaccurate representation of the facts of the Transfiguration Scene.]

*Teacher.* We must proceed. The narrative says: "But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep, and when they were awake they saw his glory." The lesson we would find here is the extreme misfortune of being dull and heavy in the prayer-meeting. They lost a good deal by it. They did not see Moses and Elias come. They did not go up so explicitly to pray as Christ did.

Were you never in a forest in summer, and as you reclined at the foot of the trees, you were almost shut out from the air of heaven, while looking up you could see the wind breathing over the tops of the trees, shaking the foliage, and making the twigs tremble, and you wished that you were only high enough, that you might get the breath that was stirring overhead? Just so, have you never gone away from a prayer-meeting feeling that you had been down in the valley, feeling troubled and despondent, and that if you could only have risen higher you might have had joy and peace and breathed the air of heaven? The way to reach this enjoyment is to start higher. Prepare for the hour of prayer. Get yourself on the high ground of expectation and desire. Like our Saviour and his disciples, go up into the mountain to pray. Get as high as you can above the din and turmoil of life, and there you will have sweet communion with the Master.

“And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles,” &c. We have already spoken of the tabernacles

and of the whole scene as suggesting Jewish history.

“Not knowing what he said,” &c.,—the narrative proceeds. That is, Peter was thrown into confusion by the surpassing splendor and unexpected glory of the vision. Have we not known men similarly affected in times of revival, who are dull and heavy while God is manifesting his glory by his Spirit, and who wake up sometimes in astonishment, if they wake up at all, from the slumber with which they greeted the work at its beginning among them?

“While he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed them; and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.” “Thus,” as Dr. Huntington beautifully puts it, in one of his sermons, “as one enters into the deep dark providences of God he is frightened; but when once entered in he discovers the form of the glorified Christ. On entering only is he troubled.” A good thought, but not in this verse. The text here means that only Moses, Elias and Christ entered into the cloud. Peter and James and John did not enter in. The first “they” refers to the

disciples, who feared when "they," the others, entered into the cloud. The voice testifying to Christ's glory, came to them as they were without the cloud. Peter dwells on that in his second epistle, first chapter, 17th and 18th verses, where he refers to the voice he heard in the Mount.

"And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone." Mark puts it very finely: "Suddenly, when they had looked round about they saw no man any more save Jesus only with themselves." *Jesus only!* This is the motto of every true spiritual life. *Jesus only!* If we had been there would this have been our thought? I am confident, rather, that some of us would have been questioning Moses about the burning bush, or his mysterious sepulture, or the plagues of Egypt and the exodus, with the passage of the Red Sea, and many other things; but the *one thing* for the disciples to see was Jesus and JESUS ONLY!

"And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen"—by express command, doubtless, of our Saviour. Those around about them were not able to bear such extraordinary truths; they were too ad-

vanced for them, and Jesus must take his disciples with him to communicate them, even to them, lest also they should not receive them. But what a bond of union between these three men must this God-committed secret have been! How they would talk to each other about it in the days that succeeded, before his resurrection! What proof they would have in their own heart of the greatness and the glory of their Divine Master! I pity with all my heart those Christians whom I sometimes meet, who, when called upon to give testimony for Christ, are forced to speak of their innermost, tenderest, closest feelings in regard to Christ. It seems to me that almost every Christian has some Tabor-top experience that he cannot talk about till after the resurrection.

*Scholar.* And now what would you say was the chief lesson of all this passage?

*Teacher.* I have no doubt that the design of the whole scene was to show the disciples in that peculiar posture of their minds to which they had come at the very moment of his humiliation, that the Saviour was glorified and Divine; to show them that even in the immediate prospect of the cruci-



fixion our Saviour was the chosen of the Father, the well-beloved of God. It was necessary that some extraordinary demonstration, to confirm their faith, should be made, especially to those who were to be prominent in the establishment of the church. And I am accustomed to look upon the transfiguration scene very much in the light of the record in the Epistle to the Hebrews: after the covenant of redemption in Christ the Son was made with God the Father, and after he had said, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God!"—after that early arrangement with the Son and the Father, through which the redemption of the world was committed by the Father to the Son, then Jesus, as the Son, came forth from the bosom of the Father; and going to the earth, as he passed through the ranks of the angels on his way through the gates of pearl (if I may make the scene so graphic as that) as he passed out of heaven, and when the shining throngs began to understand that the Prince of the Kingdom was going down to be crucified upon this wandering, rebellious planet—at that very moment, lest there should come to them even one derogatory thought

concerning him, the order goes forth from the highest throne, "Let all the angels of God worship him!" And just so to the disciples. When the full doctrine of the crucifixion burst upon Peter's mind he said, "Let it not be so, Lord." It was necessary then, that at that point, a splendid demonstration of the obedience and devotion of the Lord Jesus Christ should be made. These I conceive to be the main purposes of the transfiguration.

*Rev. Mr. T*——. How will you manage, with such a view, the 16th verse of the first chapter of 2d Peter, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty," and then the other fact that the transfiguration occurs immediately after the promise of the Saviour in the three Gospels, of his coming.

*Teacher*. Are you certain that they refer to his second coming? We will not enter upon this now. I think we hold the truth together, but we have not the time to develop it.

*R. W*——. Can we not get something home

close to our own experience, right here? Here were three who were soon to go forth to a baptism of great suffering. They were now getting views of the preciousness of the Redeemer such as they had never had before. When we enter into suffering at the command of Christ, shall we not also receive from him sweet comfort and consolation to strengthen us, and are not these views of him given to us to enable us to pass through the coming sorrows he has appointed us unto?

*Teacher.* Truly, this is the design. I think that God never gives us the full manifestation of his Spirit but he would strengthen us for some trial, or build us up against some attack, or prepare us against a coming disappointment. In sunshine he makes us ready for the storm. Brother W——, my heart is very full of practical illustrations that might elucidate and apply this precious portion of the word, especially to younger scholars. But I do not propose to instruct the instructors before me. I see they do not need it.

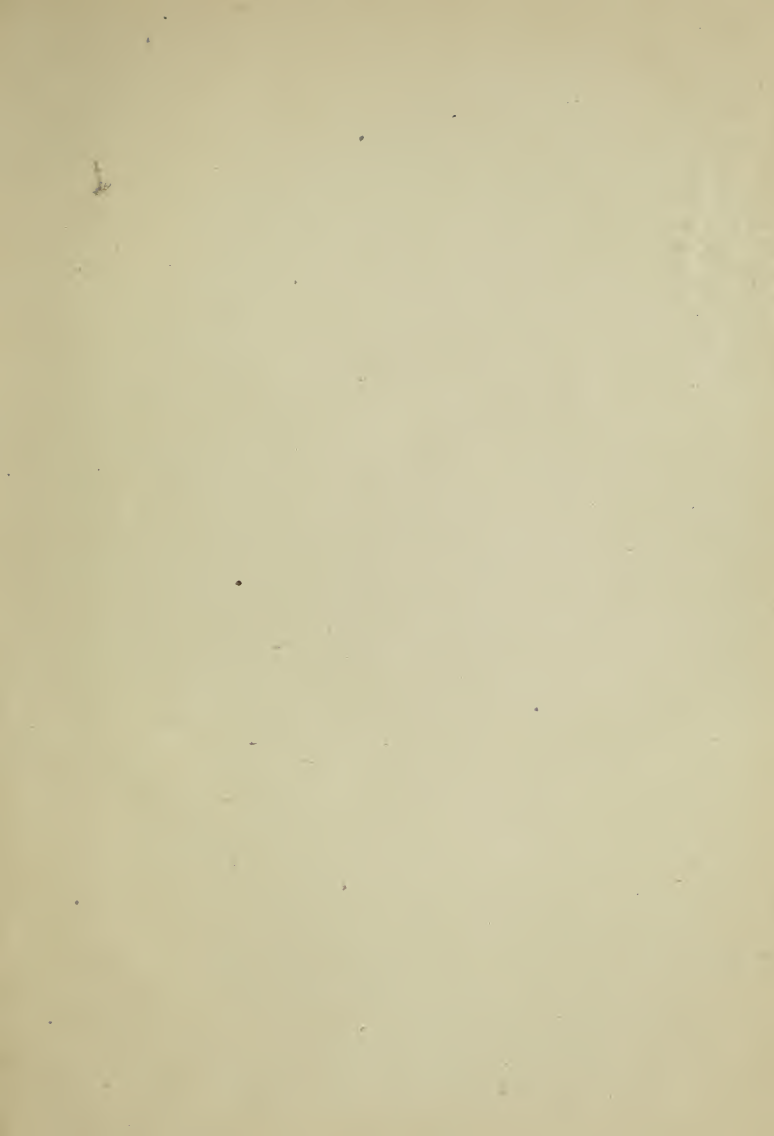
*Scholar.* What do you make the leading thought of the lesson?

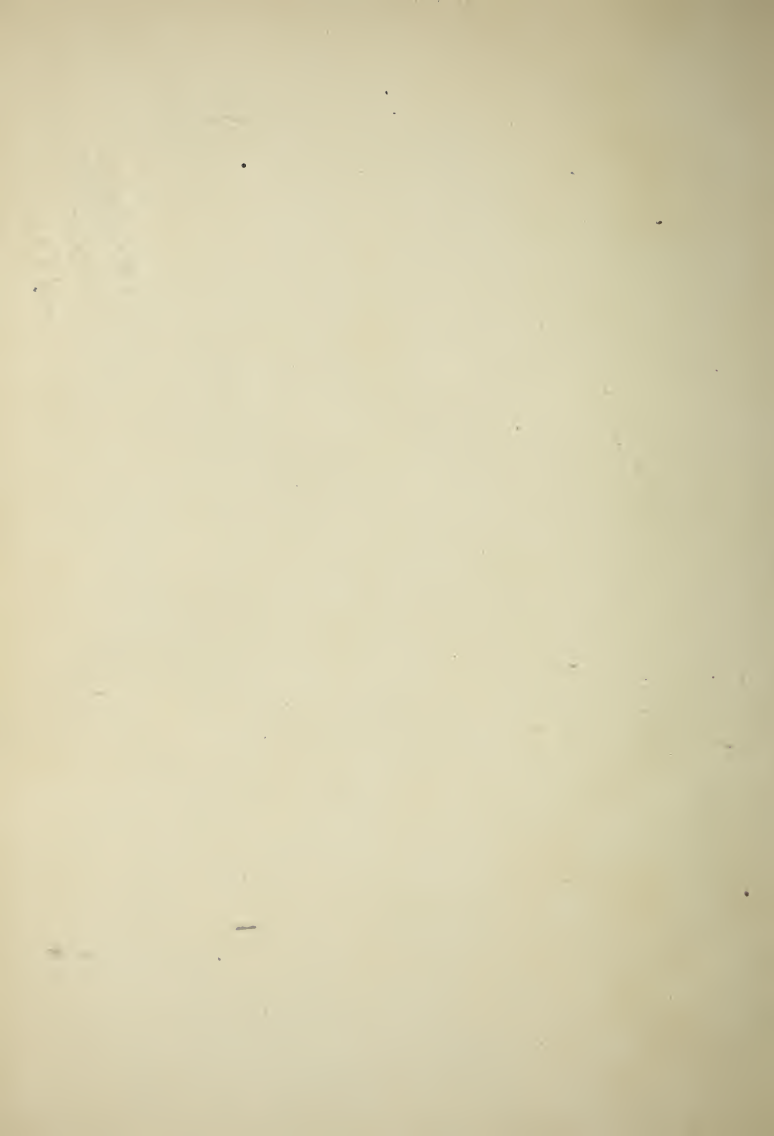
*Teacher.* Besides that I have mentioned, I should

make the following leading thoughts: the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the recognition of friends, and the interest in heaven in regard to things on the earth, and the revelation of a future state in so far as this may be considered a revelation.











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